HOW PEOPLE AGED SIXTY AND OLDER PERCEIVE PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT PEOPLE’S ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROWING OLDER

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Christin O. Hemann

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This study explores older adults’ (aged 60 and up) perceptions about prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors as they move through the aging process. The purpose of this study is to understand the factors that affect how older adults perceive prejudice and discrimination, and whether the characteristics of old-ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination. The methodology followed in this study was phenomenology. The objective of this study was to understand the personal experience and feelings of the subjects about experiencing (or not experiencing) prejudice and discrimination based on their age.

Literature reviewed in this paper focused on several main factors relating to stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. These factors included employment, ageist words and aging stereotypes, mass media and advertising. The literature review established that older adults are often targets of prejudice, and that the factors listed above reinforced the explicit and implicit attitudes
and beliefs toward older people and old age. The literature also demonstrated a link between the effects of these factors, and how they perpetuate the negative image of aging.

Participants in this study included 15 residents aged 60 and older living in an affordable, independent housing complex for seniors in Northern California. Findings from this study were sought to expand current knowledge regarding prejudicial attitudes towards older people, discriminating practices against older people, and how institutional practices and policies can perpetuate stereotypes about older people. The results from this study may strengthen the current understanding about what kinds of prejudice and discrimination elderly people may face because of their age.

_________________________, Committee Chair
Cheryl Osborne, Ed.D.

_________________________
Date
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my loving husband, Hans Hemann. His tireless support and encouragement pushed me forward during those countless days that I did not feel I had it in me to succeed. I know this journey has not been easy for him and I have missed the two of us (terribly) over the past four years. This study is also dedicated to our son, Braedon Hemann. He is our greatest miracle, and a sweet reminder to our family that dreams can come true.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my committee members for their support throughout the thesis process: Dr. Cheryl Osborne for her patience, guidance and support over the past four years, and Joe Rodrigues for his unwavering belief in me. I would also like to thank the following people for assisting me throughout my graduate studies: my friends and colleagues at the California Department of Aging and at Assembly Member Rich Gordon’s office for their continual support and encouragement; Elissa Silva and her mother, Bobbi NaSal; and my friends and family who have carried me through my long and extended college career.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one serves as an overview of the research study. In this chapter, background information, purpose of the study, theoretical rationale, research questions, and assumptions of the study are discussed.

Background of Issue

Stereotypes related to aging pervade many aspects of life. They come up in jokes and cartoons. Or, in health-care settings, where a doctor might talk to the adult child rather than to the older adult about their health, or when a store clerk thinks an elderly person needs to be addressed slowly or in a loud voice (Dahman, 2009). According to Palmore (2001), the stereotype of a typical older person exaggerates the importance of a few characteristics, and the society assumes these characteristics to be true of all older people. The omission of what is seen as a realistic portrayal of aging can leave many older adults feeling that their lives and their wealth of lived experience are not accurately depicted in movies, television, print, music, or advertising. Others may feel that they not only are portrayed unrealistically but actually have had their voices ignored altogether (Palmore, 2001).

Ageism can be defined as stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. The term “ageism” was introduced by Robert N. Butler, M.D. in 1968 to describe discrimination against seniors, which was patterned on sexism and racism (Cherry & Palmore, 2008). As defined by Butler, ageism is the systematic
stereotyping of and discrimination against older people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplished this with skin color and gender (Dennis & Thomas, 2013). Ageism can also be defined as ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are based against persons or groups based on their age (Greenbaum, 2009). The concept of ageism is fairly new and it differs from racism and sexism in the sense that eventually everyone, if they live long enough, will become old (Palmore, 2001).

While the milestones of maturing into adulthood are a source of pride for most people, the signs of natural aging can also be a cause of shame or embarrassment for some older adults (Levy, 2001). Various older adults may try to fight off the appearance of aging with cosmetic surgery, or purchase anti-aging products. Maybe a few may try to hide their age, joke about their “senior moments,” or even unconsciously encourage how the media depicts older adults in television, movies, and in modern day literature (Montepare & Zebrowitz, 2002).

Conversely, ageism can have a positive perspective when the attributes of age are deemed beneficial. For example, a positive view recognizes an association between aging, greater wisdom, patience, and a heightened appreciation of life's benefits. In fact there are at least eight positive stereotypes that many people associate with older people: kindness, wisdom, dependability, affluence, political power, freedom, internal youth, and happiness (Logan, 1992). Although many older adults report that their lives are more satisfying than ever, and their self-esteem is stronger than when they were young, it is
important to note that some older adults may still be subject to cultural attitudes that may make them feel invisible and devalued (Logan, 1992).

Unfortunately, as reported in the review of the literature, the majority of older persons report that they have actually experienced prejudice or discrimination to some degree because ageism remains embedded within the workplace, healthcare, language and the media. This study was designed to explore the relationship between prejudice and discrimination and explores how ageist ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices can create a bias against adults based on their age.

**Problem Statement**

Older adults are often targets of prejudice and discrimination, and can face many challenges overcoming the problem given the prevalence of negative stereotypes surrounding aging in society today (Bennett & Gaines, 2010). Prejudicial thoughts and feelings towards older people, old age, and the aging process are all relevant factors and can ultimately affect people of all ages and their attitudes towards growing older. Older adults are victims of discrimination in the workplace through hiring practices and/or forced retirement; they are negatively portrayed in the media, and are frequently targets of stereotypes about their competence and mental acuity. Age discrimination is also evident in elder abuse, healthcare, nursing homes and in emergency services (Horton, 2007). This study seeks to investigate the types of stereotypes associated with aging, and looks at the factors that might contribute towards how people perceive prejudice and discrimination as they move through the aging continuum.
Definition of Terms

The defined terms are selected because of their significance to the study. The terms are listed alphabetically for ease of reference.

Age Discrimination

Refers to the actions taken to deny or limit opportunities to people on the basis of age (Butler, 2001).

Ageism

Refers to any form of prejudice or discrimination based on chronological age (Butler, 2001). Ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are based against persons or groups based on their age (Rahman, Applebaum, Schnille, & Simmons, 2012).

Aging

An ongoing, all-inclusive biological process all living things experience over time (Rahman et al., 2012).

Baby Boomer

Describes a person who was born during the post-World War II baby boom between 1946 and 1964 (Macunovich, 2000).

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things on the grounds of race, age or sex (Levy, 2009).
Independent Housing Complex for Seniors

A type of senior living community that offers recreation and social opportunities, and a low level of health and support services.

Old Ageism

Referring to stereotypes about differential behavior toward older persons (Butler, 2001).

Prejudice

A type of emotion which is often linked to the cognitive process of stereotyping (Butler, 2001).

Stereotypes

A well-learned set of associations that link a set of characteristics with a group (Palmore, 2001).

Purpose of Study

Few research studies have specifically examined the honest, personal expressions of prejudice by the aging population overall because looking at chronological age tells us very little about how an older person might experience being old or feeling old. This study aims at investigating the expressions of bias associated with aging, and looks at the factors that contribute towards how people perceive prejudice and discrimination as they move through the aging process. This study also explores why many people tend to accept age stereotypes without a question compared to those stereotypes associated with race and gender. Research suggests that the majority of older persons have experienced
some ageism to some degree, but many of these studies do not really review the honest
and personal expressions about the aging process by those who are experiencing the
aging process. This research study aims to fill that gap.

**Theoretical Rationale**

This qualitative phenomenological study was performed to understand the factors
that affect how people aged sixty and older perceive prejudice and discrimination. The
theory followed in this study was the Stereotype Embodiment Theory (SET), which is a
theoretical model founded by Levy (2002) which explains the process by which age
stereotypes influence the perceptions and health of older adults. Levy found that the
effects of age stereotypes affected a number of cognitive and physical outcomes
including memory, cardiovascular reactivity, and longevity. While SET has been used
primarily to explore the influence of age stereotypes on health and functioning, given its
flexibility, this researcher expanded the use of SET in this study to include a wider range
of examples of prejudice and discrimination related to an older adult’s cognitive, physical
and mental health.

The objective of this study was to understand the personal experience and feelings
of the participants about experiencing (or not experiencing) prejudice and discrimination,
so it was important to adopt the phenomenological approach to this research. Because this
researcher was interested in exploring an older adult’s perception on prejudice and
discrimination through one’s own lived experiences, Hycner’s (1985) guidelines for
phenomenological analysis were adopted to describe the perceptions and experiences of
an older adult moving through the aging process (Hycner, 1985). Research questions were based on an analysis and interpretation of the subjects’ responses to semi-structured focus group questions, and audiotaped observation. The research questions and expectations about the conclusions of the research were formed based on the literature review, and the use of these interviews as the information source complied with the phenomenological research guidelines.

**Research Questions**

1. How do people 60 or older define/interpret old age?

2. What kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudiced?

3. What kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be discriminatory?

**Study Description**

The literature reviewed in this paper focused on several main factors relating to stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. These factors included employment, ageist words and aging stereotypes, mass media, advertising and ways to reduce ageism. For each factor, the literature review explored studies related to ageism and discrimination. The literature review also established that these factors affected both younger people’s view about aging, and also confirmed that they affected the older adult’s view about aging and their perceptions surrounding prejudice and discrimination as well.
Overall, it was well established through the review of the literature that older adults are often targets of prejudice and discrimination. Ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices on the part of individuals that are biased against people, or a group, do reinforce the explicit and implicit attitudes and beliefs toward older adults and toward old age. The review of the literature also confirmed that the characteristics of ageism do seem to have much in common with the characteristics surrounding other types of prejudice and discrimination, and that ageism does seem to be pervasive in nature, often going unrecognized or ignored by those who are actually victims of the discrimination. The gap in the research occurred when it failed to address an accurate portrayal of aging; because the factors that relate to stereotyping and discrimination do not accurately address “all that there is to aging” (Greenbaum, 2009, p. 25).

A preliminary pilot focus group with older adults aged 60 to 92 was conducted by this researcher in October, 2012, which included residents from an affordable, independent housing complex for seniors located in Nevada City, California. The “middle old” (now in their 70s and 80s) were greatly affected by the Great Depression of the 1930s, and learned about the value of thrift and prudence. Based on this preliminary pilot study this researcher realized that more data were needed and that an additional focus group would need to be performed with Baby Boomers (born 1946-1954) that were still in the workforce, and/or recently retired. The baby boom generation is now entering its 50s and early 60s, and is most clearly characterized by growing up in the 1960s, a very transformative period in our nation’s history. Based on this observation, an additional
focus group was executed on October 29, 2013, with baby boom residents from an independent housing complex for seniors located in Sacramento, California.

The age of the participants in the second focus group was limited to age 60 and older, due to research questions contained in this study. The topic and questions of the focus group were chosen for several reasons. First, it was important to establish how people actually define and interpret old age, as the meaning is often very personal and subjective. Second, questions were picked to determine if the participant’s meaning and perceptions of old age transformed or evolved over a period of time, or if their perceptions remained unchanged as they experienced the aging process. And, finally, the focus groups needed to be held with participants from the Baby Boomer Generation.

This researcher then compared the results of the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group with the results from the 2013 primary focus group using phenomenological methods to determine how these two different cohorts perceived or experienced prejudice and discrimination related to aging to the same degree based on their personal experiences, and how they might have changed as they grew older.

The principal reason for this research was to fill an important gap in the literature. Research suggests that the majority of older persons have experienced ageism to some degree, but unfortunately the review of the literature confirmed that many of these studies do not really reveal the honest, personal expressions of prejudice by the aging population overall, and to different degrees through the aging process. Second, updated research was needed to determine what kinds of attitudes and behaviors older adults actually perceived
to be discriminatory and prejudicial. Finally, research was also needed to explain how an older adult experiences discrimination as he or she grows older. Many research studies have been focused on the Baby Boomer Generation, but not a lot of research has been conducted throughout the span of an older adult’s aging continuum, and how their views might change over time. Aging boomers will be the generation of great significance, as they will be faced to compete for entitlement resources, such as Social Security and Medicare that are currently being utilized by the middle old.

**Assumptions Underlying the Study**

This study focused on the factors that affect people’s attitudes towards growing older, and three assumptions were underlying this study. First, it was assumed that the majority of focus group participants have experienced some sort of prejudice and discrimination based on their age. Second, it was assumed that some participants would express and confirm that both institutional and governmental practices and policies perpetuated stereotypes about older people. Finally, it was assumed that all questions asked in the focus group were answered to the best of the participant’s abilities.

**Study Limitations**

Findings from this study were sought to inform and educate the public by documenting the extent of prejudice and discrimination towards older adults. However, while qualitative research is considered strong for attention to detail, and useful in discovering similar meanings in a complexity of cases, qualitative studies are also accused of sometimes being impressionistic, subjective, and lacking in precision (Lester,
1999). While qualitative methods serve as a useful tool to convey a participant’s feelings and experiences, it has also been argued that single qualitative methods cannot provide a solid ground for generalizing across cases (Lester, 1999).

Although this qualitative study was significant for several reasons, there were a number of limitations inherent in the study. What was not fully confirmed, and a limitation of this study, was identifying the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudicial and discriminatory. Therefore, more research needs to be done on this subject. Additionally, it took time to locate and recruit members of the focus group, assemble a sample, develop trust and rapport with the group. The amount of time allotted to collect the data was less than needed to pursue in great depth, the answers to the three research questions contained in this study.

**Human Subjects Consideration**

This research proposal was submitted to the California State University Sacramento Human Subject’s Committee for review and accepted on September 25, 2013. After the Committee determined that conducting an additional focus group (in addition to the preliminary pilot focus group) posed no risk to the survey subjects, a final focus group was performed on October 29, 2013, with 10 residents from another affordable, independent housing complex for older adults located in Sacramento, California.
Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to get the participants' perceptions and input on their experiences relating to stereotyping and discrimination, and to gather information related to their personal experiences. The findings from this study appear to indicate that most of these older adults have experienced some form of prejudice and discrimination based on their age or the aging process, which was expected. None of the participants in this study seemed to be surprised by or intimidated by experiencing some form of prejudice and discrimination. In fact, this research actually confirms that these older adults actually expected to experience some form of prejudice and discrimination as they aged, and felt that it was “just a normal part of the aging process.” Data from this study was sought to expand current knowledge regarding prejudicial attitudes towards older people, discriminating practices against older people, and how institutional practices and policies can perpetuate stereotypes about older people. The results may strengthen our current understanding about what kinds of prejudice and discrimination elderly people face because of their age. With an increased knowledge and understanding about older adults and the aging process, prejudicial attitudes towards the elderly may improve, and American society may learn to recognize that aging stereotypes can have negative impacts on older people (Greenbaum, 2009). Documenting the extent of prejudice toward older persons can help lay the groundwork for a change in social attitudes and expectations about the aging process.
Summary

This research focused on answering three questions: First, how do people age 60 and older define or interpret old age. Second, what kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudicial? And, third what kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be discriminatory? It was expected that some subjects had experienced some sort of prejudice and discrimination based on their age. It was also expected that some subjects would express and confirm that both institutional practices and policies perpetuated stereotypes about older people, indicating a need to bring the prejudices to light by making the public aware that they do not accurately represent people age 60 and older.

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study to the reader. Following an introduction to the topic of interests, the background information, problem statement, purpose, significance, and nature of the study were presented. The following chapters detail the background, methodology and results of this study. Chapter 2 describes the literature found on the various factors that contribute to prejudice and discrimination that affect people’s attitudes towards growing older. This information is followed by literature related to ways of decreasing ageism and age discrimination. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and objective of the study and discusses how older people may interpret their experiences related to prejudice and discrimination compared to those who have yet to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age, or just beginning to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age. Chapter 4 consisted of a
phenomenological study with interviews with 10 older adults aged 60 and older. Chapter 5 provides the summary of the study and effectiveness of the focus group process, including any noted limitations as well as conclusions and recommendations.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a synopsis of the study to the reader. Following an introduction to the subject, background information, purpose of the study, theoretical rationale, research questions, and assumptions of the study were introduced. Chapter 2 serves as a review of the literature and focuses on several main factors relating to stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. These factors include ageism, ageist words and aging stereotypes, employment, mass media, advertising and ways to reduce ageism. Pertinent peer-reviewed journal articles, books and studies were expanded upon in this section, and the Internet was used to search for related websites relating to ageism. This literature review identifies historical and current literature relating to the aging population, and demonstrates a link between the factors that contribute towards ageism in the United States. Each factor highlighted seeks to support this researcher’s theory that prejudice and discrimination helps to perpetuate the negative image of aging.

Below is a review of the major theories and journal articles that show how prejudice and discrimination against the elderly not only affects a younger person’s view about aging, but also affects the older adult’s view about aging and their perceptions surrounding prejudice and discrimination as they move through the aging process. Research studies are also included that demonstrate that many stereotypes exist
surrounding the realities of being an older adult, and that ageist ways of relating to old people are in fact common, frequent, and most notably subtle. This chapter concludes by discussing how this research reveals a link between the effects of each factor and the potential negative influences on the image of aging in our society.

**Aging in America**

In an effort to gain a better understanding of what it means to be elderly, the literature was examined for common themes that indicate how the definition of old age is currently being defined in the United States. Several authors discussed aging in America and consider how the definition of old age is currently being reevaluated, especially in light of the Baby Boomer Generation just coming into the traditional retirement age of 65.

What does it mean to be elderly? Some people define “being elderly” as an issue of physical health, while others simply define it by chronological age (Bonnesen & Burgess, 2004). According to United States Census Data, the United States’ older adult population can be divided into three life-stage sub-groups: The young-old (approximately 65-74), the middle-old (ages 75-84), and the old-old (over age 85) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Today’s young-old age group is generally happier, healthier, and financially better off than the young-old of previous generations (Bartram, 2005). In the United States people are better able to prepare for aging because resources are more widely available. Also, people are making proactive quality-of-life decisions about their old age while they are still young, before they reach a health crisis (Bartram, 2005).
Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of old age in the United States. While most Americans do not consider themselves old at age 40, protection under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) banned arbitrary discrimination against workers ages 40 to 65 in all terms of employment, including hiring, discharge, compensation, promotions, and training (Rix, 2006). Some federally funded programs designed to specifically to assist older persons, such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) use 55 as the lowest age of eligibility (Buccigrossi & Robinson, 2012). For many people old age traditionally begins at 65, when workers become eligible for full Social Security benefits. However, the age of eligibility for full Social Security benefits is gradually rising to 67. As mentioned above, the U.S. government typically classifies people aged 65 as elderly, yet the World Health Organization has no standard other than noting that 65 years old is the commonly accepted definition in most core nations, but it suggests a cut-off somewhere between 50 and 55 years old. To complicate matters, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP, 2002) cites 50 as the eligible age of membership.

Demographically, the U.S. population over age 65 increased from three million in 1900 to 33 million in 1994, and increased to 36.8 million by 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). This is a greater than tenfold increase in the elderly population, compared to the tripling of both the total population and of the population under 54 (Hobbs, 2012). This dramatic increase has been called the “graying of America,” a term that describes the trend of a larger and larger percentage of the population getting older and older (Sade,
There are several reasons why America is graying so rapidly. One of these reasons is life expectancy. When reviewing Census Bureau statistics grouping the elderly by age, it is clear that in the United States people are living longer (Werner, 2010). Between 2000 and 2012 the number of elderly citizens between 90 and 94 increased by more than 30%, and the number of elderly citizens 95 to 99 increased by almost 30%, the number of centenarians (those 100 years or older) increased by 2,910, and 1,400 supercentenarians (those 110 or older) were counted in 2000 (Werner, 2010).

From 1997 through 2012 many supercentenarians were found through the recruitment efforts of the New England Centenarian Study (NECS). NECS was originally developed in 1994 as a longitudinal study of centenarians. The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of centenarians and their family members and discovering determinants of exceptional longevity and healthy aging (Schoerhoten et al., 2006). The research started as a population-based study of all centenarians living within eight towns in the Boston area, however, the study eventually expanded enrollment to include siblings of centenarians and their offspring from throughout North America. And, since 2008 it has directed the current efforts of locating and recruiting subjects 105 years old and older. Between 1994 and 2012, the study enrolled more than 1,800 centenarians and 123 supercentenarians, and more than 600 centenarian descendants. This research found that a majority of the centenarians were born between 1880 and 1910 and reached a median survival of 103 years. As a result,
many participants have survived 30-40 years past the median survival of their birth year cohort (Schoerhoten et al., 2006).

Also in relation to birth cohort demographics, the financial impact on aging baby boomers is increasingly becoming an area of interest for many gerontologists. The 77 million boomers born between 1946 and 1964 are just now reaching the average retirement age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s, the Baby Boomer Generation was the first group of children and teenagers with their own spending and marketing power (Macunovich, 2000). Many experts in the field believe that the Boomer Generation will change the way we think about retirement and aging, just as they transformed notions of relationships, with delayed marriages, fewer children, more divorces and ideas about careers (with more women in the workplace) (Grinberg, 2011). It is not surprising then, that as this group ages they will undoubtedly redefine what it means to be young-old, middle-old, and oldest-old.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute Report (2008), two-thirds of early boomer households have not accumulated enough savings to maintain their lifestyles and are expected to have a ripple effect on the economy as boomers work and spend less and without major changes in behavior, and about two-thirds of those boomer households will be heading for sharp drops in their lifestyle. By using previous data that was collected in the McKinsey Global Institute Aging Consumer Survey conducted in 2007, 20.6 million households were surveyed for this report. The McKinsey Institute’s conclusions were supported by this yearlong research project, which concluded that more than three-
quarters of boomers are unprepared for retirement. The research included information from a database of U.S. household financial data sorted by age, income, and wealth from 1962 through the third quarter of 2007; the creation of an econometric forecasting model that projects boomer and other cohort finances to 2035; a survey of over 5,100 households of boomers and the Silents (the generation that preceded the boomers), and 32 in-home ethnographic interviews with boomer households approaching or just past retirement. The McKinsey Report found that 46% (9.5 million households) which counts for almost half the boomer households believe they are well-prepared financially for the future; 28% (5.7 million households) which accounts for a little more than a quarter of the total are unprepared for retirement, but are aware of their finances. Twenty-six percent (5.4 million households), a little more than a quarter boomer households fall into the disadvantaged category, and worry about the affordability of healthcare and whether government programs will be there to support them. The McKinsey Report estimated that boomers aged 54 to 63 today, could be unprepared for retirement and will have to rely primarily on working longer to bolster their finances. Many boomers have had annual incomes below $30,000 and about three-quarters of them have incomes below $60,000. Ninety-five percent of the unprepared households have net worth lower than $100,000. Based on these projections, many boomers could be left to rely on Social Security and Medicare in their senior years. Also, nearly half of the boomers are in physically demanding occupations such as construction, production, and some service jobs that may make it necessary for them to switch jobs, which is difficult in later life. This research
found that although there would be clear benefits for enabling the boomers to work longer, there are significant legal and institutional barriers that need to be overcome. Working longer will not be enough to ensure that all unprepared boomers can maintain their living standards in retirement.

While most of the research in the McKinsey Global Institute Report (2008) was directed towards baby boomers that are unprepared for retirement, little attention was directed towards wealthy boomers and how they might fare in their retirement years. Based on research presented in the McKinsey Report, it is important to note that this cohort will most likely be a transforming generation due in part because of their sheer numbers, with one out of five Americans projected to be over 65 in 2025 (Butler, 2006).

Baby boomers are more educated than the generations that preceded them and have a history of social activism and a sense of entitlement. Hopefully they will utilize their numerical and educational advantages to promote an agenda for action, characterized by decisive efforts to transform the culture and experience of aging in America, to enrich the everyday lives of all who would grow old, and strengthen the social context in which people grow old. To achieve this requires immediate attention to various forms of discrimination. This is a matter of human and civil rights. (Butler, 2006, p. 4).

North America’s older adult population is continuing to increase due to technological advances in medicine, a lengthened life expectancy, and a group of baby boomers now reaching the average retirement age of 65 (Macunovich, 2000). As this
happens, many older adults could be left to rely on Social Security and Medicare in their retirement years, however these federal entitlement programs could be at risk as the Baby Boomer Generation begins to retire. As the nation’s view of the elderly begins to transform it is important to study how these adults could find themselves the victims of prejudice and discrimination based on their age.

**Ageism**

To help the reader grasp what it means to experience prejudice and discrimination from an older adult’s perspective, this section of the literature review discusses ageism, and focuses on how a number of societal factors contribute to ageism in today’s culture. Ageism has become rooted in North American culture as it is unintentionally passed on to children from parents who might (or might not) embrace ageist stereotypes. Therefore, those same ageist misconceptions that are held by adults might also be held by teens and children. Moreover some older adults also feed into the negative stereotyping by making jokes and comments about growing old, aging and other older adults (Cherry & Palmore, 2008).

Most older persons report that they have experienced ageism, and although polls do not reveal the frank personal expressions of prejudice by the population at large, ageism remains embedded within the nation’s institutions with de facto discrimination in the workplace, health care, language and the media. Examples include the failure to hire or promote older persons, the absence of appropriate
care of older persons in long-term care institutions, abusive language and imagery revealed in negative cartoons and drawings. (McIntyre, 2009, p. 19)

Three types of ageism are addressed in this researcher’s literature review. The first is *Personal Ageism*, an individual’s attitudes, ideas, practices, and beliefs that are biased against older people. An example is a healthcare provider assuming that an older patient is not competent to participate in development of his or her medical care when the provider would not make that assumption about a younger patient in the same situation (Dennis, 2007). The second ageism is *Institutional Ageism*, and refers to established rules, missions, and practices that discriminate against older individuals or groups based on age (Dennis, 2007). An example of this is mandatory retirement at a particular age. These stem from governmental programs and policies that use age to categorize people to determine their eligibility for retirement or health benefits and may unintentionally fuel negative stereotypes, even though the purposes of such programs are to provide benefits or services to older persons and the elderly (Hobbs, 2012). Another example is Medicare and the community-based programs which were created under the Older Americans Act of 1965. The fact that older people were singled out as medically, socially and economically vulnerable marks a significant difference between the United States and other western nations, where subsidized healthcare was considered a basic need for citizens of all ages (Rix, 2006). The third ageism is *Intentional Ageism* which includes attitudes, rules, or practices that are held, implemented, or engaged in with the knowledge that they are biased against older people (Dennis, 2007). Ageism can be intentional,
meaning a deliberate process of thought and action to stereotype based on age but more commonly, it is inadvertent, when people unconsciously attribute certain characteristics to a person because of his or her age. An example would be when an employer requires that a candidate for a job has at least 10 years’ experience. This in turn, would disadvantage a younger person and would therefore be indirectly prejudiced (Buccigrossi & Robinson, 2012).

According to Cherry and Palmore (2008), ageism includes prejudice (stereotypes and attitudes), personal discrimination (behaviors), and institutional discrimination (policies and practices). Ageism is the last discrimination. It is the third great “ism” after racism and sexism. Like racism and sexism, it is prejudice or discrimination against a category of people – in this case, against older people (Palmore, 2001). But ageism is different in two ways from the other “isms;” everyone may become a target of ageism if they live long enough, and many people are unaware or deny it, because it is a relatively new and subtle concept. Nevertheless, ageism is widespread in modern societies, in contrast to more traditional societies where old age is honored and respected.

Despite its prevalence in American culture, it is important to note that the public’s awareness of the social practice of ageism is very limited, thus further highlighting the need for this research. One obstacle to society’s broader understanding of aging is that people rarely understand the process of aging until they reach old age themselves. As people grow older they tend to define old age in terms of greater years than their current age (Logan, 1992). Additionally, myths and assumptions about the elderly and aging are
common and contribute to the problem of perception by perpetuating stereotypes into their own lives (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2005). Many stereotypes exist surrounding the realities of being an older adult. While individuals often encounter stereotypes associated with race and gender and in turn are much more likely to think critically about them, many people just accept age stereotypes without a question (Levy, 2002). Finally, ageism often differs from racism and sexism in that there is little evidence of hostility towards older people. Yet ageism seems to be pervasive, even though much of it may go unrecognized or ignored by those who harbor or experience the consequences of negative stereotypes themselves (Levy, 2002). This may indicate that many people might prefer to postpone old age, regarding it as a phase that will never arrive. And, some older adults may even succumb to stereotyping their own age group in an effort to feel better about their own aging process (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2005).

A self-reported ageism survey was developed by Palmore (2001) to measure older person’s experience of ageism defined as prejudice and discrimination. This study measured the frequency and types of ageist behaviors in our society based on a self-report, and found that younger and older adults typically recognized similar numbers of ageist behaviors. The Relating to Older People Evaluation (ROPE) was a self-reported survey to measure the frequency and types of ageist behaviors. The questionnaire contained 20 types of ageist behaviors: six were positive types of ageism and 14 were negative types. Examples of positive types of ageist behaviors are: *Hold doors open for old people because of their age* and *Vote for an old person because of their age.*
Examples of negative types of ageist behavior include: *Sending birthday cards to old people that joke about their age* and *vote against an old person because of their age*. The items were developed from literature on ageism, discussions with academics, experiences of older people, and results from the Ageism Survey which was comprised of negative ageism items (Palmore, 2001). A total of 314 individuals participated in the study. Respondents were college students, community-dwelling older adults, and persons affiliated with a university community. In all, there were 147 college students with 123 from Louisiana State University (LSU) and 24 from the University of Georgia. There were 120 community-dwelling old adults with 37 responses to an article in *Fifty Plus*: 25 seniors from southern Louisiana and 58 from northern Virginia (Palmore, 2001). There were 47 persons from a university community which consisted of 16 responses to an article in the *Duke Center on Aging* newsletter (Palmore, 2001). In all, there were 100 males and 214 females. The age range was 18 to 98 years.

This study revealed that the most frequent type of ageism, reported by 58% of respondents, was being told a joke that makes fun of older adults. Additionally, 31% reported being ignored or not taken seriously because of their age (Palmore, 2001). Examples of positive types of ageism include, holding doors open for old people because of their age and voting for an older person because of their age. Examples of negative types include sending birthday cards to old people that joke about their age and voting against an old person because of their age. The results from this study have several implications for current views of ageism as a theoretical construct and social
phenomenon. And, from a social cognitive perspective, the study shows that ageism may also influence older persons’ implicit beliefs about their own competencies as well as self-stereotypes (Levy, 2001). This study was important because it was the first study that showed that older individuals’ perceptions of having experienced ageism are important to consider insofar as such incidences speak to the vulnerability of different segments of the older adult population as well as the prevalence of ageism in society in general (Cherry & Palmore, 2008). It also found that many behaviors perceived as courtesy or lightheartedness towards older persons can be manifestations of discriminatory, stereotypical attitudes (Cherry & Palmore, 2008). Results from this study confirm this researcher’s argument that ageist ways of relating to old people are in fact widespread, frequent, and most notably subtle.

While ageism may be unconsciously passed on to children from parents who might or might not support ageist stereotypes, recent economic factors combined with changing aspects in today’s family structure could end up being an unexpected step towards combating prejudice and discrimination. During the early 1900s, many households in the United States were home to multigenerational families. The experiences and wisdom of elders was highly respected, and elders often offered support to their children and often helped raise their grandchildren (Sweetser, 1984). In fact, up until not too long ago it was as common as it once was for older relatives to live with their children and grandchildren in the same household.
One of the reasons for the growing number of grandparents living with their children and grandchildren under the same roof was the recession which started in late 2007 (Strong, Bean, & Feinauer, 2010). Whether triggered by a lost job, a foreclosed house or a sinking pension, grown children and their elderly parents have increasingly started to come together under a single roof. Also, in the past few years more attention has been placed on the trend of grandparents raising grandchildren (Strong et al., 2010). The number of grandparents who provide primary care for their grandchildren is growing because grandparents sometimes have to step in to help provide childcare when one or both parents are in the workforce, or in many situations grandparents may even have to take care of their grandchildren when their own children are otherwise unable to parent (Strong et al., 2010). In fact, population estimates indicate that 1.5 million children are in grandparent-headed households without any parents present (Strong et al., 2010).

Kornhaber (2014), author of *The Grandparent Guide*, created the Foundation for Grandparenting to nurture and advocate for intergenerational relationships. Although Kornhaber has not published any academic journals, it is important to mention that his Foundation has been a valuable resource for grandparents parenting the second time around. Kornhaber’s work indicates that children raised by grandparents tend to be more well-rounded, have greater respect for the past, perform better in school, and have a good sense of family and family values. Additionally, the act of raising grandchildren can also have a positive effect on grandparents themselves. A study by McGowen, Ladd, and Strom (2006) presents the positive experiences of grandmothers raising grandchildren.
The purpose of this study was to compare the parenting styles of custodial, co-resident, and nonresident grandmothers and their perceptions of satisfaction, success, and teaching with their grandparent caregiving role. The 124 subjects were custodial grandmothers, co-resident grandmothers, and nonresident grandmothers. Participants completed an online survey that combined quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, and scores on grandparent satisfaction, success, and teaching were derived from the Grandparent Skills and Needs Inventory (GSNI) (McGowen et al., 2006). The qualitative data presented both positive and negative perceptions of grandmothers raising their grandchildren. Among their positive perceptions, this study found that the subjects were more patient, relaxed, less angry, less frustrated, and were more concerned with their grandchildren’s needs than they had been with their own children. The subjects also reported being able to spend more time enjoying their grandchildren and were more involved in their activities. This study also found that almost all subjects reported that caring for their grandchildren had enriched their lives, which contributed towards happier personal lives because the subjects felt a renewed sense of purpose, more joy in their lives, and that their grandchildren kept them more active and feeling younger. Finally, the subjects felt that the rewards and blessings of caring for their grandchildren far outweighed any sacrifices they had to make in their personal lives (McGowen et al., 2006). The findings from this study seem to suggest that the benefits of grandparents being in their grandchildren’s lives are clear, and that these relationships may help to stop the practice of ageism from being unconsciously passed on to children in the future.
Negative and positive stereotypes that are acquired from everyday social environments (that often begin in childhood) will be further discussed in the following section.

This portion of the literature supports the impression that the pendulum may be slowly starting to swing back towards society beginning to re-evaluate some of the benefits of multigenerational households, and also the role of the elder. This momentum could create more opportunities to put a stop to some of the misconceptions about aging, and help toward enhancing the positive effects that elders have on our society. The influence of ageist words and stereotypes in society will also be discussed in the next section.

Ageist Words and Stereotypes

This study seeks to explore a possible correlation between prejudice and discrimination. For this reason, this portion of the literature review looks at ageist words and stereotypes, and attempts to evaluate how ageist words and stereotypes contribute towards discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. Stereotypes are a significant component of any “ism” including ageism. Both negative and positive, stereotypes are acquired from everyday social environments, beginning in childhood, and often without awareness (Bennett, 2010). Because people are exposed to ageist concepts before it relates to their own experience, it is more likely that these concepts will be internalized as part of normal human development throughout one’s lifespan (Levy, 2009). A simple example of a very common age-related comment is the use of the term *senior moment*, which typically refers to a momentary lapse of memory. At any age, use
of the term assumes that older people are forgetful and when used by the young and middle aged, infers that they too expect to have memory problems as they age. The use of the term points to the lack of information that a great majority of people have about memory and aging. Yet the more the term “senior moment” is used and accepted in common language, the more it perpetuates the negative image of aging (Bennett, 2010). Another example is the first time a child receives the message that all old people are hard of hearing, it is a concept. The thousandth time the child receives this message, it is a belief. By the time the child is an older adult, rather than being understood as part of a disease process, elevated hearing loss is an accepted fact of aging (Levy, 2001).

To identify ageism, the practice of negative stereotyping must first be recognized. It is important to note that while all people learn about cultural stereotypes through socialization, not all people validate the stereotype and believe it to be true. According to Levy (2001), people tend to respond to each other almost unconsciously using stereotypes based on race, age, and gender. Perceptions and judgments about others can be made instantaneously, without conscious thought or effort and can contribute towards a negative characteristic towards aging. Levy argues that the onset of old age occurs when individuals reach a threshold that is formally defined by a variety of arbitrary and inconsistent dates, such as senior admission to movie theatres or enrollment with Social Security. This passage invests age stereotypes with self-relevance, or personal resonance, because it brings an internal identification with others who are old (Levy, 2001).
Unlike race and gender stereotypes, which individuals encounter while developing group self-identities, individuals can acquire age stereotypes several years before becoming old themselves. And, younger individuals are likely to automatically accept age stereotypes without questioning their validity (Levy, 2009). Perdue and Gurtman (1990) outlined some of their experiments in an academic journal and describe that individuals can tend to take longer to identify positive words when presented after the word old than when presented after the word young. While no demographic data or sampling size were discussed it is worth mentioning that in both experiments the authors found that the incidental learning of trait descriptors was different depending upon whether they were encountered in questions concerning old persons or young persons. In unannounced memory tests, more negative traits were recalled when they had been encoded with reference to an old person, and more positive traits were retrieved more often when they had been encountered in a question about a young person. In both experiments the authors noted that the labels old and young had the effect of increasing the accessibility of associated traits in one’s memory (Perdue & Gurtman, 1990). In both examples, it was shown that the subjects tended to make decisions concerning negative traits more quickly after being primed with old than after being primed with young. These experiments not only indicate that age biases can be unintentional and unconscious, but they also support Levy’s literature mentioned earlier in this section, that people tend to respond to each other using stereotypes based on race, age and gender.
While people develop the inherent propensity to stereotype the elderly, people also tend to hold multiple stereotypes about older adults. In fact, Branscombe and Hummert (2004) hypothesized that older adults operate in a subordinate category that includes various other stereotype subcategories and suggest that young, middle-aged and older adults endorse positive grandparent subcategories as stereotypical of older adults. For instance, across age groups, people tend to agree that the following negative subcategories are stereotypical of older adults; impaired (e.g., forgetful, rambling of speech), despondent (e.g. burden to society, useless), shrew (e.g., ill tempered), recluse (e.g., sedentary) and vulnerable (e.g., afraid of crime, suspicious of strangers) (Remedios, Chasteen, & Packer, 2010).

In a qualitative study conducted by Branscombe and Hummert (2004), the consequences of perceived age discrimination (by both the young and the old) was explored, and how participants responded to experiencing perceived discrimination was examined. Fifty-nine young adults (17-20 years) and 60 older adults (64-91 years) participated in the study. The young adults were students, and the older adults were recruited from the community and received nominal compensation for their time. During the study, a questionnaire was used and participants completed measures of age discrimination, age group identification, personal self-esteem, life satisfaction, and age group status. This research provided evidence that one’s status alone is not sufficient to experience the negative effects of discrimination on a participant’s well-being and looked at the differences in how young and older adults experience discrimination are a function...
of the expectation of (a) upward social mobility and (b) avoiding future discrimination. The authors found that when young adults can anticipate discrimination in their future by perceiving transitioning out of that group they will be less likely to be harmed by that discrimination. In contrast, when older adults do not expect to leave their group or avoid discrimination in the future they will seek alternative ways of preserving their well-being. Additionally, this research found that in order to avoid discrimination and being stigmatized, an older adult may not choose to identify with their age group. This research supports Sneed and Whitbourne’s (2005) theory discussed earlier in this chapter and could explain why an older adult might end up stereotyping their own peers in an act of avoidance or denying their own aging process (Branscombe & Hummert, 2004).

While the process of age stereotypes are often facilitated by a person’s exposure to social cues it is essential to address in this literature review that ageism can also be positive as well as negative. It can be just as prejudiced to say that older people should be healthy, busy, productive, and independent, than to say they are not all of those things. This suggests that less attention has been paid to positive ageism than to negative ageism – because positive ageism is less frequent and it is not perceived to be as hurtful. It is important to emphasize there are at least eight positive stereotypes that many people associate with older people: kindness, wisdom, dependability, affluence, political power, freedom, eternal youth, and happiness. Especially because none of these are any more valid than the negative stereotypes we attribute towards aging (Logan, 1992).
To support this point, research conducted by Remedios et al. (2010) demonstrated that when young adults contemplate their older possible selves as they related to the older adult age group, they systematically recruited positive age-related stereotypes to describe themselves later in life. Participants in this study were 101 young adults (64.4% women) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Toronto. The students participated in the study to fulfil a course requirement, and the average age was 19 years old. During the course of the study participants were given 6 to 10 minutes to write a narrative passage about their possible older self in the future. The results of the study showed that the participants mostly avoided mention of negative stereotypes which is consistent with the notion that they were selectively activating positive rather than negative outcomes considered to be stereotypic of older adulthood. Additionally, this selectivity in the use of stereotypic information in use of one’s own future self-occurred despite the fact that young adults tend to associate negative rather than positive, age stereotypes with individuals in the 70-year old range (Remedios et al., 2010). This research suggests that as a younger person considers their fears about growing older, they still could end up focusing on the positive events stereotypically associated with aging.

As discussed earlier in this section, to identify ageism, the habit of stereotyping must first be recognized by the individual. To start the process of isolating the basis of the prejudicial thoughts it is important to keep in mind that not all older adults are the same – in fact they are incredibly diverse. It is important to be mindful that older people do not all look, think, or function all in the same manner. Older adults are individuals,
just like younger and middle aged people. And, making assumptions and generalizations about older adults only contributes toward the discrimination of individuals because of their age. The next section of the literature review discusses how stereotypes about aging and the elderly, both negative and positive, have a significant influence upon older adults themselves.

**Stereotype Embodiment Theory**

The methodology followed in this study was the Stereotype Embodiment Theory (SET), which is a theoretical model founded by Levy (2009) which explains the process by which age stereotypes influence the perceptions and health of older adults. Levy’s theory is consistent with this researcher’s hypothesis that the factors discussed in this literature review contributes towards an older adult might experience prejudice and discrimination.

Stereotype Embodiment Theory is broken down into a three step process: (a) age stereotypes are internalized from the host culture at a young age, (b) at some point these age stereotypes become “self-stereotypes” about oneself as an aging individual, and (c) these self-stereotypes are then consciously and unconsciously activated to exert their effects on an individual’s health (Levy, 2009). Underlying these three steps are SET’s four main theoretical premises: (a) the stereotypes become internalized across the lifespan, (b) can operate unconsciously, (c) gain salience from self relevance, and (d) utilize multiple pathways. Levy’s work demonstrates that aging stereotypes are internalized often starting from early childhood, and in North America and Europe these
stereotypes tend to be largely negative. Levy also argues that age stereotypes tend to operate unconsciously based on an experimental study that showed age stereotypes can impact memory of older people (Levy, 2009).

Levy and Meyers (2004) research suggests that older adults who have more optimistic and positive beliefs about the aging process tend to take better care of their health. In their study, the relationship between aging self-perceptions and preventive health behaviors were examined and whether older adult’s perceptions towards their own aging predicted health behaviors over time. Levy and Meyers conducted a multivariate linear regression to test the predictive value of aging self-perceptions on the preventive health behaviors of 241 individuals, who participated in the Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement (OLSAR) aged 50–80 years old. The OLSAR researchers collected six waves of data, extending from 1975 to 1995, in Oxford, OH. In the last wave of the study that took place in 1995, 333 individuals participated and, of these, 241 individuals provided responses for the variables in the study. The final cohort of 241 participants did not differ in the ratio of men to women from the excluded participants who were in the 1975 baseline study. However, the final cohort tended to be significantly younger at baseline (57 vs. 66) and more educated (4.86 vs. 4.08). Also, the final cohort was more likely to be White (98.8% vs. 93.56%) and tended to have higher scores on the Health Scale for the Aged (5.46 vs. 4.42) than in 1975. Participants responded to an attitude towards own aging scale and a set of eight preventative health measures and individuals with more positive self-perceptions of aging reported practicing more
preventative health measures such as limiting alcohol consumption, eating a proper diet, maintaining a healthy weight, exercising and avoiding tobacco (Levy & Meyers, 2004). Age, education, gender, and race did not predict preventive health behaviors. Likewise, baseline self-rated health and functional health did not help determine whether a person participated in preventive health behaviors over the next two decades. The results concluded that older adults who had more positive self-perceptions of aging practiced more preventative health behaviors than those with more negative perceptions. The predictive value of aging self-perceptions relative to other promising covariates suggests that it has considerable importance for elders’ approach to preventive health behaviors.

Levy’s work suggests that aging has traditionally been explained in terms of physiological processes that eventually lead to mental and physical decline, however, more recent findings suggest that aging is a more subjective experience with health outcomes that are tied to social mores and behavior just as much as they are tied to an older adult’s biological compound (Levy, 2009). A longitudinal study by Levy, Zonderman, Slade, and Ferrucci (2009) demonstrated that age stereotypes internalized across the life course could have real health consequences. This study found that individuals who held negative age stereotypes earlier in life have a greater likelihood of experiencing cardiovascular events as much as 38 years later than individuals with more positive age stereotypes (Levy et al., 2009). The sample consisted of 440 adults aged 49 and older who participated in a community-based survey, the Ohio Longitudinal Study of Aging and Retirement (OLSAR). There were 440 individuals who met the three inclusion
criteria: was age 49 years or younger at baseline, responded to the age-stereotype predictor, and had not experienced a cardiovascular event before baseline. This research found that older adults with more positive self-perceptions of aging, measured up to 23 years earlier, lived 7.5 years longer than those with less positive self-perceptions of aging. The findings from this study suggest that the self-perceptions of stigmatized groups can also influence longevity. When older individuals apply negative age stereotypes to themselves, they can adversely influence a wide range of outcomes (Levy et al., 2009). Ageist beliefs, feelings and behavior are automatically activated in response to the perception of a person as being old or elderly. This implies that ageism can (and often will) operate without our conscious awareness and control.

Stereotype Embodiment Theory (SET) has been used primarily to explore the influence of age stereotypes on health and functioning. Given its flexibility, this researcher expanded the use of SET in this study to include a wider range of examples of prejudice and discrimination related to an older adult’s internal dialogue and perceptions about growing older and experiencing ageist behaviors in their everyday lives including in the workplace, at social events and in healthcare settings. The studies reviewed support this researchers theory that the factors discussed in this literature review contribute toward how an older adult might experience prejudice and discrimination. The next section discusses how ageism affects an elderly worker.
Employment

This portion of the literature review discusses how the labor market is another system that perpetuates ageism. It is projected that the aging population will increase the number of workers age 60 and older by one-third over the next 10 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). And, their numbers could grow even more rapidly if labor force participation rates continue to grow at older ages. In an effort to understand how ageism effects an elderly worker, it is important to look at how employers, both private and public, engage in age discrimination because of institutional ageist stereotypes.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the population of older adults is growing. In 2010, older Americans comprised 13% of the U.S. population and population projections for 2030 show a marked increase, with older adults comprising 19% of the population or an estimated 72 million older adults (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Not only are older adults growing in numbers but they are also living longer. On this note, the number of older people choosing to remain on the job has also been increasing since the late 1990s, and now older adults represent the fastest-growing segment in the country’s workforce. Faced with the expectation of living longer, older adults may choose or have remain in the workforce for longer and defer their savings, pensions, and Social Security for a later age (Benz, Sedensky, Thompson, & Agiesta, 2013). By 2020, an estimated one-fourth of American workers will be 55 or older, up from 19% in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) shows that the total labor force is projected to increase by 8.5% during the period of 2006-2016, however when analyzed by age
categories, very different trends emerge. The number of workers in the youngest group, age 16-24, is projected to decline during the period while the number of workers age 55-64 are expected to climb by 36%. But the most dramatic growth is projected for the two oldest groups. The number of workers between the ages of 65 and 74 and those aged 75 and up are predicted to soar by more than 8%. By 2016, workers aged 65 and over are expected to account for 6.1% of the total labor force. With the Baby Boomer Generation about to start joining the ranks of those age 65 and over, the graying of the American workforce is only just beginning (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

As it relates to topics discussed in this study, ageism or age discrimination in the workplace can be defined as the practice of excluding applicants or employees from all types of employment decisions based solely on the calendar age of the individual (Dennis, 2007). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 set the stage by banning discrimination in the workplace based on race, color, sex, religion and national origin; however it did not include age. In 1967, the Labor Department added age discrimination to the list with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) which covered workers from the age of 40 to 65 (AARP, 2002). Under this act, it became illegal to discriminate against an individual because of his or her age in regards to employment including hiring, promoting, firing, layoffs, benefits and training (AARP, 2002). In 1990, the Older Worker Benefit Protection Act of 1990 (OWBPA) amended the Age Discrimination in Employment Act by prohibiting employers from discriminating against older employees.
by denying them benefits. This law was a response to an earlier Supreme Court decision allowing a company to deny or reduce benefits to older workers (AARP, 2002).

It is important to draw attention to the fact that times are quickly changing for older employees as today’s work environment has gone through major changes in the last quarter of the 20th century. The traditional management hierarchy that many older adults had operated in has been replaced with one that involves fewer levels of authority, reduced numbers of middle-level management positions, and increases in the responsibility and decision-making authority of employees (Buccigrossi & Robinson, 2012). Additionally, flexibility has become the norm in many work environments, often replacing the more traditional and routinized approach to work. The result is a workplace that requires an almost constant adaptation by employees, which could be difficult for some older workers to adapt to (Rix, 2006).

In fact, according to a study performed by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) for Public Affairs Research (2013) about half of Americans ages 50 and older are still in the workforce or have been looking for work. Findings from this study provide valuable information on the implications for individuals and the economy of this growing trend toward working later in life. A random-digit-dial (RDD) survey of the 50 states was conducted via telephone with 1,024 Americans ages 50 and older. Interviews were conducted with 815 respondents on cell phones, and interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish from August 8 to September 10, 2013. Twenty percent of those surveyed reported that since turning 50 had experienced prejudice or discrimination.
because of their age in the job market or at their current place of employment. Thirteen percent of those surveyed reported they had been passed over for a raise, promotion, or a chance to get ahead; 12% reported they have been passed over for certain assignments; 12% reported they received certain unwanted assignments; 9% reported they had been denied access to training or the opportunity to acquire new skills because of their age; and 8% reported they had been laid off, fired, or forced to retire because of their age. Finally, 23% of those surveyed reported they had personally worried about their own ability to do their job since turning 50 years old (Benz et al., 2013). Findings from this study suggest that age discrimination is a common problem in working life supporting the need for further research on this topic. The studies cited in this review of the literature show different results regarding the prevalence of discrimination of older workers in the workplace, and suggests that no current standard has yet been published to measure the perceived frequencies of the problem at hand (Furnunes & Mykletun, 2010).

Not only does age discrimination take place in the workplace but there are also financial costs associated with age discrimination beyond the various forms of negative social views. Lost wages and benefits are a direct personal cost of job displacement, being passed over for a promotion, or losing out to another applicant because of age (Rix, 2006). Additionally, employers face costs in the form of lost knowledge and experience, added expenditures for recruitment and training, and often less than optimal performance on the part of new workers being trained (Buccigrossi & Robinson, 2003). For American corporations, age discrimination can lead to significant expenses. Over the years, the U.S.
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has seen an increase in age discrimination complaints. In Fiscal Year 2006, the EEOC received nearly 17,000 charges of age discrimination, resolving more than 14,000 complaints and recovered $51.5 million in monetary benefits. Costs from lawsuit settlements and judgments can run into the hundreds of millions of dollars, most notably with the $250 million paid by the California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) under a settlement agreement six years ago (Rix, 2006). By 2007, age discrimination cases had increased to 19,103 and were the fastest growing type of discrimination cases (Rix, 2006). These statistics seem to suggest that unfortunately, despite the legislation that currently exists, many organizations and employers have deep, pre-conceived ideas regarding older employees.

As it relates to employment, 2009 was one of the worst years for workers of all ages (since the Great Depression). The average monthly unemployment rate for men reached 10%, the highest rate since these records began in 1948. Female workers fared only slightly better. Their 2009 average monthly employment rate was 8%, the highest rate since 1983 (Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 2000). While high unemployment rates attracted much attention, there seemed to be less consideration of how older workers fared. Interestingly, in past recessions unemployment has remained relatively low for older workers, whose seniority was often protected during rounds of layoffs. However, during the 2009 recession, age might have not protected older workers as well as it once did, because workplaces are now less regularized, and labor unions are less powerful (Yeatts et al., 2000). The high unemployment rate experienced combined with the long
duration of unemployment spells among older workers in 2009 highlights the need for better workforce development programs for older workers (Yeatts et al., 2000).

James, McKechnie, Swanberg, Besen (2012) explored the relationship between employee perceptions about the unfair treatment of older workers compared to positive and active employee engagement. In a sample of over 4,500 workers, ages 18-94, from a retail workforce across the country, the authors examined the relationship between perceptions that older workers are less likely to be promoted and employee engagement by using linear regression models. The authors also examined whether discrimination is: intentional (fit, but less likely to be promoted) or unintentional (unfit, and less likely to be promoted). Results from this study seemed to indicate that perceived discrimination is related to lower levels of employee engagement among workers of all ages. The findings also suggest that for older workers, there is a negative relationship between unintentional discrimination and employee engagement, while for younger workers the relationship is more negative for intentional discrimination. This research indicates that as older workers may not exit the workforce in predictable ways, there is still a need to understand the potential barriers an older adult might experience as the number of older people choose to remain in the workforce. This research also indicates that due to the complexity of the concept, the prevalence of age discrimination in the workplace is difficult to assess.

As this section of the literature demonstrates, many employers and employees can mistakenly perceive older workers to be rigid, inflexible, incapable of learning new skills, unproductive and over-paid (Dennis & Thomas, 2007). But, it is important to take into
account that discrimination against older workers overlooks a number of advantages to hiring them, including low absentee rates, less turnover, low accident rates, less alcohol and drug addition, increased job satisfaction, and company loyalty (AARP, 2002). The skill sets, experience and insight older workers bring to the workplace should be valued and cannot be easily substituted by younger worker with a shorter resume.

While it proved difficult for this researcher to locate studies on age discrimination in the U.S., qualitative research was found that suggests that many countries are becoming increasingly reliant upon an aging workforce. As part of a broader study on maintaining the competence of older workers, Billett, Dymock, Johnson, and Martin (2011) investigated the extent to which a group of employees in Australia, aged 45 and older, perceived if they were discriminated against because of their age. Surprisingly, against the authors’ expectations arising from their review of literature the study participants reported little in the way of explicit age-related bias in their place of employment. Data was collected from 50 interviews: 48 individual interviews and two focus groups with workers aged over 45 with 97% falling into the category of mature age. The age ranges are as follows: 45–49, 26%; 50–54, 26%; 55–59, 32%; 60–64, 13%; and 65–69, 3%, and the interviews and focus groups took approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Against what was expected, 38 of the respondents (76%) claimed to be unaware of older workers being less valued than younger employees in their workplaces. In fact, only seven (14%) cited anecdotal or suspected discrimination and five (10%) reported actual discrimination. These findings actually suggest that the data collected offered a far more
positive portrayal of experiences in the workplace than what might have been expected from interviewing a cohort of older workers. However, although these findings suggest a lack of prejudice and discrimination in the workplace, some accounts of age discrimination were more ambiguous than others and subtle cases of age discrimination were reported. Moreover, participants provided instances of subtle employer bias against older employees and that many participants felt that their employment could be under threat as they grew older. In all, the data suggested three emerging themes: (a) an underlying fear among mature age workers about their vulnerability, (b) the possible use of redundancy to mask age discrimination, and (c) employers wanting to rid themselves of mature age workers who appear to be inflexible (Billett et al., 2011).

Given the evidence of ageism in the workplace provided in this review of the literature, some employers are taking steps to combat ageism in the workplace with specific programs and alternative approaches to training (Dennis & Thomas, 2007). For instance, diversity training has become increasingly popular in organizations today because employees need to be sensitive to the legal and ethical issues of ageism. Additionally, employees need help in understanding the value of an older workforce. In house diversity training could help sensitize employees to the needs and values of those around them (Dennis & Thomas, 2007). In addition to diversity training, older workers need to have the same access to corporate training programs as everyone else, and in some cases they may need additional training to complement their technical experience and to keep it current (Gibson, Jones, Cella, Clark, Epstein, & Haselberger, 2010).
Finally, educational opportunities such as tuition reimbursement should be equally available for every worker. Many older adults may not have the college degrees that younger employees might have, and older workers may have the time and interest to augment their years of experience with formal education. They should be given the opportunity to do so (Gibson et al., 2010).

This review of the literature suggests that an increase in workforce participation of older adults has implications for the behavior of employers and employees alike. While some employers seem to be reluctant to have researchers move into their environment to study ageism for fear of legal repercussions, researchers have been able to study the relationship of management decisions to ageism, as noted in this chapter. This research suggests that ageist attitudes not only show up in the workplace, but can permeate all facets of society. However, unlike the obvious forms of age discrimination presented in the media or in advertising, this research proves that estimating the pervasiveness of age discrimination is not as easy or as obvious to recognize in the workplace. The next section discusses the entertainment media regularly perpetuates the stereotypes of older adults.

**Mass Media**

Many writers in the field agree that mass media affects the perceptions of older people and the views of older people have of themselves, this portion of the literature discusses how the mass media is one of the most visible and influential institutions responsible for perpetuating stereotypes about older adults. The literature also looks at
how portrayals of the elderly in television shows often reflect negative cultural attitudes toward aging (Greenbaum, 2009).

There is no denying that television is a popular target of prejudice and discrimination, and could be faulted for perpetuating the negative stereotypes of aging that exist in society. In the United States, society tends to glorify youth, associating it with beauty and sexuality. In comedies, the elderly are often associated with grumpiness or hostility. Rarely in media and advertising do the roles of older people convey the fullness of life experienced by seniors (Greenbaum, 2009). In American culture, the aged are not depicted as experienced “elders.” Rather, older people are tolerated and respected to the extent they can act like younger people and work, exercise, and have healthy relationships (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy, 2005).

In a study by Donlon et al. (2005), it was shown that older adults with greater lifetime exposure to television often possessed more negative age stereotypes, which suggests that age stereotypes can be internalized by an older adult by way of one’s culture. This study examined whether greater television exposure predicted an older adults’ perception about negative images of the aging process, and whether an intervention based on maintaining a television diary of viewing impressions would increase their awareness of the stereotypical manner in which elders were presented in the media. Seventy-six participants, ranging in age from 60 to 92 years participated in the study. The participants were recruited from a cross section of New England communities through posters, newspaper advertisements, and announcements at community centers
and met the following criteria: 60 years of age or older; community dwelling; and able to read, write, and respond to questions. Participants’ average level of education was three years of college. Consistent with the general population, most of the sample were women (64%). In addition, most of the sample were retired (70%); of the remaining group reported they were still working, two-thirds worked part-time. As expected, all participants showed a correspondence between greater television exposure and more negative images of aging. Also as expected, the intervention-group participants developed a greater awareness of how elders are presented on television (Donlon et al., 2005). While a correspondence between greater television exposure and more negative images of aging was proven, the participants ended up developing a greater awareness of how older adults are presented on television. The results concluded that the development of awareness by participants provided a means of helping older adults confront ageism (Donlon et al., 2005).

Perhaps it is not surprising then, given the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes of aging in society, that seniors themselves start to believe these characterizations. If the media continues to exclude, stereotypically portray, or show older adults as less than active members of society this is the message the majority of the viewing public will start to internalize. For instance, by the time younger individuals become elderly they have spent upwards of 50 years expressing and internalizing negative stereotypes of aging (Levy, 2002). Sneed and Whitbourne (2005) surveyed 242 older adults ranging in age from 40 to 85 to test the relationship between self-esteem and the identity processing
styles of identity assimilation (i.e., maintaining consistent views of the self), accommodation (i.e., changing the self), and a balance between consistency seeking and identity change. Sneed and Whitbourne found that each of the identity processes regressed on the three self consciousness variables and age. As expected, identity assimilation was positively associated with age and negatively related to self-reflection. However, identity assimilation was also related to lack of internal self-awareness. Sneed and Whitbourne also reported that one of the unique characteristics of the elderly as a social group is that eventually everyone becomes a member of the “in-group.” They also found that elderly adults had similar stereotypes around aging as did younger adults, and that the content of negative stereotypes of older adults remains stable over the life course, but reported that as adults moved from an “out-group” member to an in-group member, their beliefs become more varied and multifacted (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2005).

While the gaps in the literature suggest a need for further research, it is important to note that attitudes about aging in the media has also improved over time. By the 1990s the portrayal of older people in television shows had improved somewhat since the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s, prime time drama television shows, daytime serials, and commercial advertising featuring older persons presented a more neutral image or even an improved overall image of the aged by featuring older characters who appeared powerful, affluent, healthy, active, admired, and sexy (Bradley, 2001). However, additional research studies documenting these improvements were not available to this researcher.
The studies reported in this section help explain the process by which age stereotypes influence the perception of an older adult by examining how they are depicted on television, in film, and in marketing. As a major socializing agent, television helps to convey the images and ideals that ultimately help construct our social fabric (Blakeborough, 2008). The next section of this chapter will look at how advertising supports negative stereotypes of older adults through incorrect interpretations of older adults in print, and in television.

**Advertising**

As noted in the previous section, while television can play a positive role in helping some older people overcome spells of loneliness and/or boredom, many people over the age of 60 have viewed negative advertisements of older adults depicted on television, and also in print (Greenbaum, 2009). This portion of the literature review discusses how advertising in the media often perpetuates negative stereotypes towards the elderly.

*Nielsen Media Research* reported in the fall 2005 that the average American watches four hours and 39 minutes of television per day. That translates to approximately 100 television advertisements a day (Greenbaum, 2009). In advertising, stereotypes can generally be described as mostly negative, feeding off of small truths and exploiting irrational fears (Blakeborough, 2008). It is true, then, that how people see others in advertising and the media depends upon how they think about their own aging, and how they think about old age in general. Age is not very central in defining who older people
think they are, however, younger people tend to have a more defined idea about what old age is like than older people do – based on advertising (Bradley, 2001).

Based on this review of the literature it may not be surprising to find that older consumers tend to have an especially negative attitude toward television advertising. Shavitt, Lowrey, and Haefner’s (1998) national telephone study of over 1,000 adult consumers assessed the general public’s current attitudes toward and confidence in advertising. Questions focused on perceptions and evaluations of advertising at a concrete and personalized level. Compared to the youngest age cohort, age 18 to 34, older respondents, age 55 to 64, were less likely to enjoy advertisements and were more likely to report having been offended by them (Shavitt et al., 1998). Similarly negative views of advertising were more strongly revealed by survey research conducted by Georgia State University’s Center for Mature Consumer Studies, suggesting that some 75% of older consumers are dissatisfied with the marketing efforts that have been directed at them (Bradley, 2001). Even though the study indicated that a more favorable evaluation of advertising than previous data would suggest most of the older respondents reported that they generally do not trust advertising, and that they tend to feel more confidence in advertising claims when focused on their actual purchase decisions.

Surprisingly, very few studies in the industry have examined how age-based marketing is slowly beginning to appeal towards an aging population, particularly the Baby Boom Generation. The baby boom cohort is starting to be seen as an attractive economic group, and as they continue through the aging cycle, they seem to be drawing
increased attention. Mass media images are evolving into a more positive look at older adults, along with the notion that these positive images of the elderly are directly tied to consumer culture and product consumption (Bradley, 2001). The elderly – at least the young-old – are viewed as an attractive emerging market, consumers with many resources and little debt. However, demographers have consistently called attention to the diversity of older Americans during the past two decades, showing the wide spread of income, assets, education, employment, and health status of older people (Bartram, 2005). Additionally, the expanded purchasing power of mature consumers has somewhat encouraged marketers to produce advertising that older people find appealing. Images of aging that marketers have found to be effective are consistent with knowledge concerning older people’s perceptions of aging. Healthy elders are likely to draw on their identity not only from past achievements but also from what they would like to accomplish in the future, showing that later in life is a time for revitalization and personal growth (Bradley, 2001). Additionally, advertisements emphasizing the significance of the grandparent role are likely to be more effective because they appeal to the desire of elders to be socially connected, and to maintain their autonomy. This goes to show that age-based marketing can and should appeal more strongly to values, traditions, and aspirations rather than to focus on the human body (Shavitt, 1998).

Bearing in mind that many older adults have the means to purchase the products being advertised it begs the question as to why the media still continues to play on the elderly? Older adults watch television more than any other age group and generally have
the disposable income to buy the products advertised during commercials. Past print and television advertisements tend to depict older adults at their worst – when they have some kind of physical ailment or have the desire to look and feel younger. While society may be making steps in the right direction, it has yet to move enough to erase the face of ageism in the media, advertising and in medicine (Butler, 2006). More positive ways to reduce ageism are discussed in the next section.

**Ways to Reduce Ageism**

To better understand how to reduce the forces that contribute to ageism, this section of the literature review looks at approaches to reduce ageism, and discusses how progress has been made though research, education and increased awareness of the problem surrounding age discrimination.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Palmore (2005) suggests that ageism can be turned around by the same sort of methods that have been successful in reducing racism and sexism – education, persuasion, protest, organization, legislation, civil suits – and by the personal examples of successful aging that challenge negative stereotypes. Some progress is currently being made though research and education, increased awareness of the problem, through legislation and civil suits, and a fairer treatment of old people in the media. However, Palmore argues that to decrease ageism society should first try to understand the ageist stereotypes they may possess (either intentional or non-intentional), and then look to treating each person as an individual. Just as racism and sexism have been reduced to a certain degree in American society, through education and training, the
same techniques and strategies could help reduce ageism (Logan, 1992). Additionally, many employers and communities provide diversity training and lessons about ageism, and age discrimination should be included in these diversity programs (Logan, 1992).

More positive images of older adults and of the aging process in the media could also help to reduce ageism in North American culture. Images featuring active, healthy, productive, and successful older persons in television shows, movies, and commercial advertising could lessen the negative stereotypes many people have about aging and the elderly (Horton, 2007). Fortunately this has changed some more recently. For instance, Douglas (2014) reported that Ed Whitlock holds the record for being the oldest person to run a marathon in less than three hours, a record that he set at the age of 69. Now in his mid 70s, he continues to run 26.2 miles under the three-hour mark. High-level masters athletes like Ed Whitlock defy stereotypical views on aging held in North America. Whitlock’s accomplishments help to change perceptions of what is possible in one’s senior years (Douglas, 2014).

In a broader sense, successful aging can include components such as life satisfaction, mental and physical well-being, and a robust quality of life (Heo, Culp, Yamada, & Won, 2013). As an outlet for meaningful activities among older adults, research on the positive aspects of leisure at an advanced age has demonstrated many positive benefits towards the aging process. In 2013, Heo et al. studied the experience of competing in the Senior Games and how it contributed towards the successful aging of older adults. To provide some background, the U.S. Senior Games are state and national
competitions for individuals aged 50 years and older and each state hosts annual senior athletic events dedicated to encouraging older adults to lead a healthy lifestyle. In this study, researchers conducted 10 in-depth qualitative interviews between January and March, 2010. The average age of the study participants was 63 years (range 52 to 71). Of the 10 participants, nine were White and one was African American. Six of the participants were men, and four were women. Five of the participants were retired at the time of the study, and the other five were still employed. The events that the participants participated in at the Senior Games were tennis, volleyball, track and field, cycling, swimming, shuffleboard, table tennis, and race walk. With the use of an interview guide, researchers used a series of open-ended questions to explore the participants’ involvement with the Senior Games and issues of successful aging. From the interviews, researchers identified five central themes that contribute towards healthy aging: (a) perseverance, (b) significant effort and career development, (c) personal and social benefits, (d) a unique ethos, and (e) identification as a senior athlete. Consistent with results from their previous studies, the authors found that competition in athletic events provided both personal and social benefits for older adults. As it relates to this study, this research suggests that serious leisure participation can add significant value to the lives of older adults with respect to positive outcomes such as a sense of achievement, personal growth, personal and social benefits, and social belonging and interactions. The findings showed that pursuing serious leisure in the form of Senior Games participation contributes to successful aging and, consequently, a quality society (Heo et al., 2013).
By modeling such activities mentioned above, other older adults can engage in successful-aging activities that challenge negative stereotypes on their own (Palmore, 2005). In addition to Palmore’s (2005) research, writing, and lectures, Palmore himself has also tried to become a model of successful aging to challenge the ageist stereotypes about old age. He has attempted to demonstrate that he can improve with age by becoming stronger through weight-lifting, by doing a birthday marathon each year, in which he rides his age in miles on his bicycle (75), doing his age in push-ups and sit-ups, and by doing some birthday adventure such as hang-gliding, bungee-jumping, sky-diving, or white-water rafting.

Besides looking into examples of successful aging, Levy and Banaji (2002) note that exemplars of admired elderly, individuals like E. Whitlock mentioned earlier in this section, or Mother Teresa, can change attitudes towards the social category as a whole. An increased focus on such exceptional people may provide seniors with valuable role models, and it may also serve as a “stereotype buster” for the rest of society (Levy & Banaji, 2002). The more young, middle-aged, and older people see and relate to each other in ways that disprove ageist stereotypes, the more likely those stereotypes could transform toward more positive views about aging.

As it relates to health, Sneed and Whitbourne (2005) suggest that with the graying of the population, that psychologists will need shift their focus from loss and decline in later adulthood to a more balanced approach in which gains and growth are emphasized. Rather than following behind the past trends established by such ageist views as
disengagement theory, psychologists should be at the forefront of discovering the ways that older people do not only survive, but enjoy, the later years of life (Sneed & Whitbourne, 2005).

As noted in this section, many disciplines are now currently studying active, successful aging in older adults and these studies have impact on many of the myths and stereotypes regarding the aging process. How society treats its older adults is influenced by many social factors, and these factors are largely based on a lack of understanding about the aging process. As more and more adults move into the traditional retirement age of 65, there is no question that additional studies will need to be performed over the next decade to specifically look at how ageism can be addressed and turned around in our society. Because awareness is the first step in overcoming ageist attitudes, as it is important for people to recognize and explore their own feelings and perceptions about growing older. The next section presents a summary of the chapter, and discusses how the literature review supports this researcher’s theory that that elderly people are often targets of prejudice and discrimination.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this paper focused on several main factors relating to stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. These factors included employment, ageist words and aging stereotypes, mass media and advertising. The literature review established that elderly people are often targets of prejudice, and that the factors listed above reinforced the explicit and implicit attitudes
and beliefs toward older people and old age. The literature also demonstrated a link between the effects of these factors, and how they perpetuate the negative image of aging.

Overall, it was well established through the review of the literature that elderly people are often targets of prejudice, and that the factors listed above do reinforce the explicit and implicit attitudes and beliefs toward older people and toward old age. This research confirmed that characteristics of ageism does seem to have much in common with the characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination, and confirmed that ageism does seem to be pervasive in nature, often going unrecognized or ignored by those who are actually victims of the discrimination. The research also demonstrated the link between the effects of these factors and how they perpetuate the negative image of aging.

The disconnect in the research occurred when this researcher looked for an accurate portrayal of aging; because it seems that the media (both in entertainment and advertising) spends a lot of time depicting the poor, frail older person, but that is not “all there is to aging” (Greenbaum, 2009, p. 25). The literature fails to address that as a result of improvements in nutrition, exercise and healthcare, the average U.S. life expectancy has risen to 77.6 years. Additionally, physical decline suggests that age itself is the cause of decline when, in fact, illness is often the cause. Although old age is often blamed, the real culprits of many illnesses include poor nutrition, environmental pollutants, stress and genetic predisposition (Greenbaum, 2009). Additionally, despite significant research over the past 30 years, the stereotyping of older adults continues to “add to the myth that older
persons contribute little or no value towards the community. Which has led some to the misguided conclusion that because older adults seem to contribute nothing they are deserving of nothing” (McIntyre, 2009, p. 8).

The next chapter of this paper addresses the Methodology used in this study. Rationale for the use of qualitative research methods is discussed, relevance of the research design to this study is reviewed, and the study’s goals are explained.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The literature review focused on several main factors related to stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. The chapter substantiated that these factors are perpetuated by the use of ageist words and aging stereotypes in the mass media, advertising and healthcare settings. Overall the literature review well established that elderly people are often targets of prejudice, and that the factors listed above do reinforce the explicit and implicit attitudes and beliefs toward older people and old age.

This chapter describes the methodology for this study that looks at how older people may interpret their experiences related to prejudice and discrimination compared to those who have yet to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age, or are just beginning to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age. It also outlines the research design and the methods by which data were collected and analyzed. Data analysis was based on Hycner’s (1985) guidelines for phenomenological analysis, which includes documented procedures for phenomenological analyzing interview data including transcription; bracketing; analysis of specific statements and themes; clustering units of relevant meaning clustering (Natural Meaning Units); and writing a summary for each individual interview.
The participants of this study were residents from two affordable independent-housing complexes for older adults located in Northern California. A link between prejudice and discrimination would be demonstrated among the participants in both focus groups through the use of ageist practices in employment, and the use of ageist words and aging stereotypes in mass media and advertising. If there was no link between these factors, then it would be determined that the participant(s) did not experience any prejudicial or discriminatory acts against them, or that acts of prejudice and discrimination went unrecognized or ignored by the participant(s).

**Research Design and Approach**

A qualitative, phenomenological research method was selected for this study because a phenomenological study is concerned with the lived experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these experiences (Grbich, 2007). Phenomenology is often used to explore, describe, document rich details of people’s experiences, especially changes in feelings and experiences over time. Phenomenology is also concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, and phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge, and subjectivity, and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation (Lester, 1999).

Five areas of this study correlate with a phenomenological research design. First, this study looked at the participant’s perceptions about experiencing prejudice and
discrimination during their aging process. According to Gray (2004), “truth and meaning do not exist in some peripheral world, but are created by a person’s connection to the world (p. 17). This study looked at both truth and meaning by examining the shared and emotional experiences of older adults, and researched how prejudice and discrimination may directly or indirectly effect an older adult’s perception about growing older. Second, through phenomenological methods, this researcher was able to collect preliminary data through semi-structured focus group interviews and audiotaped observation. Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized and are frequently used in qualitative analysis (Karjornboon, 2004). In semi-structured interviews, the order of the questions can be changed, depending on the direction of the interview (Kajornboon, 2004). In this case, the interviewer did not do the research to test a specific hypothesis but rather arranged the findings according to themes and topics to draw out key issues that were being discussed by the participants (Lester, 1999). Third, questions were targeted at the participants themselves. Participants were asked a series of questions relating to the views of younger and older people about the aging process, and if they had experienced (or not experienced) being treated differently because of their age. Semi-structured questions were asked, and new questions developed over the course of the interviews that were not anticipated in the beginning of the interview. This, in turn, gave this researcher the opportunity to probe for views and opinions of the participants (Kajornboon, 2004). The focus group participants were given the opportunity to discuss their views on age discrimination to help this researcher gain insight into their thoughts about being treated
differently as they moved through the aging process. Fourth, there were a total of 15 participants in the two focus groups, which falls between the norms of 5-15 participants in the average phenomenological study (Grey, 2004). And fifth, phenomenological research methods include in-depth and unstructured interviews, as well as observation and documentation (Grbich, 2007). This researcher used a semi-structured focus group.

The study’s objective was to gain a greater understanding of how an older adult might experience prejudice and discrimination. While this chosen research design met the stated objective and proved to be a particularly effective tool for looking into the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, phenomenological findings must be done transparently and as free from bias as possible (Lester, 1999). In order to show a solid and reliable correlation between experiencing prejudice and discrimination during the aging process, this researcher aimed to help the reader work through this study to see how the interpretations were generated from the data using phenomenological research design.

**Instruments**

In an effort to gain more than one person’s ideas at one time, and to see the interaction amongst members of the group, this researcher determined that a semi-structured focus group interview and audiotaped observations would be the most helpful process for this study. Data were collected during two semi-structured focus group interviews and audiotaped observations with older adults age 60 and older. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was used during the focus group because it is an
effective way to collect data, as well as to gain knowledge from individuals. Kvale (1996) defined an interview as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest that sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data” (p. 14).

Another popular qualitative research technique used is a focus group. This technique can be efficient because the researcher can gather information about several people in one session, and the group is usually homogeneous, meaning being similar within the group (Kajornboon, 2004). Typically, in a focus group interview, the researcher is not trying to persuade the group to reach consensus because it is essentially an interview. In fact, in multiple-participant research, the strength of inference which can be made increases rapidly once factors start to recur with more than one participant (Lester, 1999).

Collection and Tabulation of Data

The participants in this study included residents from two affordable independent-housing complexes for older adults located in Northern California. The age of participants was limited to age 60 and older, as reflected in the research questions contained in this study. The age of the participants begins at age 60 because this researcher wanted to represent some baby boomers (the cohort born between 1946 and 1964) into the study because they most likely were still in the workforce, or are just coming into retirement (Macunovich, 2000). A potential bias would occur if the subjects misreported their age. Men and women were included in the study. Participants were
English speaking only. Educational level and race are noted but not used as qualifying factors to participate in the study. Participants were selected using a Snowball sampling, also known as chain-referral sampling, which is a method of collecting qualitative research from new people using the referrals of the people who have already been included in the study (Lindlof, 2011). This method was chosen because it used the materials that were most available to this researcher to conduct a study. Recruitment of the participants took a little over three weeks.

Before research could commence on the primary focus group, approval was required from the Institutional Review Board, which then sent the researcher a Human Subjects Review Approval Letter (see Appendix A). After the initial assessment of potential participants was completed, and when it is determined that a potential subject had confirmed their interest in participating, an overview of the qualitative phenomenological study was given to interested parties through e-mail (see Appendix B), along with the informed consent statement including permission to be recorded (see Appendix C) and interview focus group questions (see Appendix D) one week prior to the selected date of the interview. The informed consent statement explained that the interviews would be taped for transcription and that privacy would be maintained by assigning code numbers to each participant.

Because of the in-depth, open-ended nature of qualitative interviews, written recordings of the responses presented a challenge; therefore, a tape recorder was used to assist the researcher in implementing a semi-structured approach that followed
predetermined questions with follow-up questions (Lester, 1999). This also freed this researcher to keep full attention focused on the respondents and communicate that what they said was being listened to, and to help to engage the subjects in order to gain further information on the topic (Lester, 1999). Interviews were transcribed using a digital recorder. The recording was destroyed after the interviews were transcribed for data analysis to identify the frequency of data reported by participants, and the connection of specific statements and themes. Participants’ names were not used. The transcription and data analysis remained confidential throughout the study.

After the participants agreed to participate in the focus group, a date was chosen based on the entire group’s availability. All the questions relating to the study were then sent to the participants one week prior to the agreed upon date so they would be prepared to answer the questions in the focus group setting. Because all the participants lived in the same housing complex, one participant agreed to bring everybody together in the recreation room of the housing complex where they resided. The day of the focus group a written “Consent to Participate in Research” form (see Appendix C) was read to everyone, and the consent form included permission to audiotape our conversation. Consent forms were collected on a written survey form which included demographic information including their name, age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, income source, employment status, last grade completed in school, source of medical insurance and any medical conditions (see Appendix E).
The topic and questions of this study were chosen for several reasons. First, it was important to establish how people actually define and interpret old age, as the meaning is often very personal and subjective. Second, questions were created to determine if the participants’ meaning and perceptions of old age transformed or evolved over a period of time, or if their perceptions remained unchanged as they experienced the aging process. Some questions were designed to obtain additional information about what kinds of attitudes and behaviors the participants perceived to be prejudicial and discriminatory (see Appendix D). For instance, participants were asked for examples of when they were treated more negatively or positively because of their age. Additionally, participants were asked if anyone had been denied housing, medical treatment or employment because of their age, so that additional information about discrimination practices might be disclosed. When asked about healthcare, some of the participants disclosed additional feelings about how they interpreted old age – that was not previously disclosed. This line of questioning helped the researcher obtain a full picture of the participant’s experience(s) about the aging process.

**Data Collection Procedures**

This phenomenological study consisted of interviews with 10 older adults age 60 and older in the primary focus group setting. The population was not ethnically diverse, but had a good variance in age. The study used a semi-structured focus group interview with some predetermined questions. The goal of the study was to get the participant’s perceptions and input on their experiences relating to stereotyping and discrimination,
and information related to their personal experiences. A pilot semi-structured interview was tested on one participant one month prior to conducting the initial focus group. All of the initial questions were modified based on the participant’s responses to the original questions. Modifications were made to determine the natural order of the questions so the information flowed well, and was easy to understand. Questions were grouped by category after the test interview and additional questions were added to the initial interview questions based on the participant’s responses. This pilot interview helped determine research questions that would meet the needs and goals of this study. The primary focus group was conducted in public during a face-to-face interaction with this researcher and took approximately 1.5 hours. There were some questions that were not answered by all of the participants. The focus group began on October 29, 2013, and ended on October 29, 2013.

Data collected from the focus group interviews supported research reviewed prior to implementing this study as well as the research questions explored in this study. The preliminary data collected from this study appears to indicate that almost all of the focus group participants had experienced some form of prejudice and discrimination based on their age or appearance. Additionally, many participants acknowledged as they started growing older they observed that other people treated them differently than when they were younger. As noted in Chapter 2 of this study, these results support the concept that people rarely understand the process of aging until they reach old age themselves, and demonstrate that elderly people are often targets of age discrimination.
Summary

This chapter described the methodology for this study that looked at how older people may interpret their experiences related to prejudice and discrimination compared to those who have yet to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age, or are just beginning to experience prejudice and discrimination based on their age. The design of this study followed the phenomenological research design. The instruments used to collect the data included conducting a semi-structured focus group interviews and audiotaped observations with adults age 60 and older. The primary focus group participants interviewed in this study included residents from an affordable independent-housing community for older adults located in Sacramento, California. The age of participants was limited to age 60 and older, due to the research questions contained in this study.

Chapter 4 presents the data, results, and provides a discussion of the participant’s thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, about experiencing, or not experiencing prejudice or discrimination as they moved through the aging process. The questions presented in this study were chosen for several reasons. First, it was important to establish how people actually define and interpret old age, as the meaning is often very personal and subjective. Second, questions were picked to determine if the participant’s meaning and perceptions of old age transformed or evolved over a period of time. Or, if their perceptions remained unchanged as they experienced the aging process. Some questions were also designed to obtain additional information about what kinds of attitudes and
behaviors the participants perceived to be prejudicial and discriminatory. Rationale for
the use of qualitative research methods is discussed, and appropriateness of the research
design to the study is reviewed.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The literature review supports the assertion that older adults are often targets of prejudice and discrimination, and can face many challenges overcoming the problem because of the prevalence of negative stereotypes surrounding aging in today’s society. This problem points to a need to study how an older adult experiences prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors, and consider whether or not these experiences might influence their aging experience.

Chapter 3 described the methodology for this study. This approach looked at how older people might interpret experiencing prejudice and discrimination compared to those who have yet to experience age discrimination based on their age, or are just beginning to experience age discrimination based on their age. This approach also outlined the research design, and the methods by which the data was collected and analyzed. Data collected from the focus group interviews supported the research reviewed in this study, as well as the research questions presented in this study.

This chapter describes how this qualitative phenomenological study was performed, discusses the procedure undertaken to complete the study, and presents the results of the study. The next section of the chapter discusses the meaning of phenomenology, provides some background to this phenomenological study, and describes how the data was collected based on emerging themes.
Background

This phenomenological study consisted of two separate focus group interviews with 15 older adults age 60 and older that took place over the course of one year. The participants of this study were residents from two affordable independent-housing sites for older adults located in Northern California. The first focus group that was conducted in October of 2012, and will be referred to in this chapter as the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group because it served as the initial run-through for collecting the necessary demographic and phenomenological data covered in this study. The second focus group was performed in October of 2013, and will be referred to as the 2013 primary focus group because the demographic data on the participants is considered to be more germane to the literature reviewed in this study.

This researcher used semi-structured focus group interviews in both focus groups with some predetermined questions that were presented in an open-ended, informal, and non-directive way. This type of interview method allowed the participants the liberty to develop their responses in the way they felt most comfortable, and also gave this researcher some flexibility as to not accidentally influence their responses. Open-ended and broad questions were presented to solicit information and to identify perceptions that participants might or might not identify with. Because this researcher was especially interested about changes in feelings and experiences the participants had felt over a period of time, the use of semi-structured interviews within a focus group setting was
used to allow participants the opportunity to reply to probing questions and comments made by other members of the focus groups.

The phenomenological analysis of this study was based on central themes that represented specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions as articulated by participants in both of the focus groups. Phenomenology is defined as “an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these experiences” (Grbich, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, phenomenological interview methods were used in this study to allow the participants opportunities to discuss their views on age discrimination, and also to assist this researcher with gaining insight into the participant’s thoughts about being treated differently (or not treated differently) because of their age or appearance. Through this open dialogue participants were not only able to openly discuss their experiencing prejudice and discrimination, but were also encouraged to discuss each other whether or not these experiences might directly or indirectly affect their attitudes and perceptions about growing older.

Phenomenological analysis was then based on central themes that represented specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions as articulated by participants in the focus groups. The participant’s explanations were used to form the foundation for the description of the group’s statements (in their own words) about experiencing, or not experiencing prejudice or discrimination as they moved through the aging process. Demographic data needed to be collected, so the next stage of the study was to pull
together the results from each focus group, and then compare the results against the research questions described in this study. The next section of this chapter discusses this researcher’s data collection process.

**Demographic Data – Focus Groups**

As stated earlier in this chapter, the first preliminary pilot focus group was performed in October of 2012 with five residents aged 60 and older living in an affordable independent-housing complex for seniors located in Nevada City, California (see Appendix E). It was only after this preliminary study was conducted that this researcher realized that an additional focus group would be needed with participants from the Baby Boomer Generation, aged 60 and older, who were still in the workforce and/or recently retired. It was obvious to this researcher that studying and collecting information about these similar, yet distinct, age cohorts would be essential to supporting the literature presented in Chapter 2 of this study. Based on this assessment an additional focus group was performed on October 29, 2013, with residents from another affordable independent-housing complex for seniors located in Sacramento, California (see Table 1).

The demographic information about the participants in both focus groups was acquired through the use of semi-structured interview questions, along with this researcher’s probing questions and comments made by other members of the focus groups. After the focus groups were completed results from the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group was then compared with the results from the 2013 primary focus group using
phenomenological approaches. Between the two focus groups, a total of 15 older adults aged 60 to 92 were interviewed.

In the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group demographic information was collected on 5 older adults who were aged 60 to 92 (see Appendix E). All of the participants in the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group were receiving income from Social Security with the exception of one participant still in the workforce. The ethnicities of the participants were identified and listed based on how the participants described themselves, and all of the participants described themselves as Caucasian or white, Italian/Caucasian and Native American/Caucasian. All of the participants received their formal health insurance through Medicare, with the exception of one. Participant 3 (see Appendix E) was still in the workforce and under the age of 65, and had private insurance provided through their employer. This demographic information was not necessary to conduct the study but it did provide some insight into the participant’s lives.

In the 2013 primary focus group demographic information was collected from 10 older adults who were aged 63 to 70 (see Table 1). Similar to the first focus group, the demographic information was acquired through the use of semi-structured interview questions, along with this researcher’s probing questions and comments made by other members of the group. Most of the participants were still in the workforce with the exception of two, one participant was retired, and one participant was unemployed due to the changes in the economy. All of the participants had formal health insurance either through Medicare or through their employer.
Table 1

Demographic Information about the Subjects in 2013 Primary Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Income Source</th>
<th>Medical Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Social Security &amp; Husband’s Pensions</td>
<td>Medicare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed – Sales</td>
<td>Medicare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed – State</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed - State</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed – Sales</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed - State</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed - Sales</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed – Legal</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Income Source</th>
<th>Medical Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Medicare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed – Senior Housing</td>
<td>Employer Sponsored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large majority if the participants were female (60%) which was expected as women tend to live longer than men based on the data collected from the New England Centenarian Study (2012). The remainder of the participants was identified as male (40%). Similar to the preliminary pilot focus group, all of the participants described themselves as Caucasian, or white, and ethnicities of the participants were identified and listed in this study based on how the participants described themselves.
Figure 1  Gender of subjects in 2013 primary focus group.

Results of Data Based on Research Questions – Focus Groups

This portion of the chapter discusses the results of the data and contrasts it against the research questions presented in this paper. This researcher started the focus group interviews by reviewing this study’s research questions involving prejudice and discrimination. First, “How do people age 60 and older define or interpret old age?” Second, “Do the characteristics of age discrimination have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination?” After discussing the research questions both groups were asked a series of questions concerning the views of younger
and older people about the aging process, and if they had noticed experiencing (or not experiencing) being treated differently because of their age or appearance. Semi-structured questions were asked throughout the course of the interviews, which still allowed additional time for additional probing questions to develop over the course of the interviews. During the interview process many themes were uncovered which were later grouped into Natural Meaning Units (NMUs) for data analysis (see Appendix F).

This researcher began the interviews with asking fairly specific opening questions like, “In what ways do you think the views of younger and older people differ?” And, “In what ways do they differ most?” To non-leading and open-ended questions such as, “Can you say more about that?” and, “Can you please give me examples of what you are speaking to?” The goal of this approach was to let the participants tell their stories so that this researcher could more fully grasp the participant’s experiences and thought processes (see Appendix D).

Based upon the participant’s responses to the interview questions presented in both focus groups a total of 23 NMUs appeared to explain the act of experiencing, or not experiencing prejudice or discrimination which describe not only how the participants processed their feelings about growing older, but also describe their associations regarding the act of growing older. The major NMUs identified in the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group are as follows: (1) family dynamics, (2) strength of character, (3) self-discovery, (4) positive attitudes, (5) independence, (6) loss of independence, (7) respect,
(8) values, (9) fear, (10) adaptability, (11) faith (12) shared experiences, and, (13) denial. (see Appendix F).

The major NMUs identified in the 2013 primary focus group are: (1) perception, (2) loss of independence, (3) independence, (4) appearance, (5) openness, (6) that is not “me”, (7) not trusting, (8) invalid, (9) confidence, (10) incapable, (11) giving, (12) freedom, (13) denial, (14) fatigue, (15) self-discovery, (16) adaptability, (17) fear, (18) family dynamics, (19) values, (20) strength of character, (21) shared experiences, (22) positive attitude, and (23) respect (see Table 2).
# Table 2

**Natural Meaning Units for 2013 Primary Focus Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My thoughts in general about aging have changed.</td>
<td><em>Perception (1), self-discovery (15)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my mind, 65 is not old.</td>
<td><em>Perception (1), self-discovery (15), denial (13), that is not me (6)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the definition of age is how you perceive aging.</td>
<td><em>Perception (1), self-discovery (15), denial (13)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold on to youth as long as we can.</td>
<td><em>Fear (17), adaptability (16), loss of independence (2)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It only registers with people if we act, look or sound old.</td>
<td><em>Appearance (4), adaptability (16), denial (13)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to go to a nursing home.</td>
<td><em>Fear (17), loss of independence (2)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old is when you are incapable of taking care of yourself.</td>
<td><em>Loss of independence (2), incapable (10), fear (17)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old is when someone else takes care of you.</td>
<td><em>Loss of independence (2), incapable (10), fear (17)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My kids struggle with me taking care of myself.</td>
<td><em>Fear (17), loss of independence (2), perception (1), family dynamics (18)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My kids are worried about me.</td>
<td>Fear (17), loss of independence (2), perception (1), family dynamics (18), strength of character (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I still capable of taking care of myself.</td>
<td>Adaptability (16), perception (1), independence (3), freedom (12), strength of character (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you age, people have different views as they go through the aging process.</td>
<td>Adaptability (16), perception (1), openness (6), self-discovery (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You perception about aging changes as you change yourself.</td>
<td>Adaptability (16), perception (1), openness (5), self-discovery (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You become more aware of your mortality.</td>
<td>Fear (17), self-discovery (15), openness (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me and my friends talk a lot more about health issues.</td>
<td>Fear (17), self-discovery (15), openness (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years ago you retired and died.</td>
<td>Fear (17), that is not me (6), values (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging has been a positive experience.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), positive attitude (22), openness (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My co-workers look out for me.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), positive attitude (22), openness (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very accepting of this “old dude” working with them.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), positive attitude (22), openness (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does youth consider you an equal or are they just polite to you?</td>
<td>Not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as an older woman I am becoming invisible.</td>
<td>Not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more outspoken now then I was when I was younger.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), respect (23), confidence (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think people are finally hearing my voice.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), respect (23), confidence (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more life experience to share.</td>
<td>Self-discovery (15), respect (23), confidence (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older women are pushed out the door at work.</td>
<td>Not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It feels like something is going on at work.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is an assumption that a younger person might perform better than an older person at work.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10), fear (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A company will put more money in a younger person than someone who is closer to retirement.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10), fear (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stay under the radar at work.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10), fear (17), fatigue (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to make waves at work.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), self-discovery (15), invalid (8), incapable (10), fear (17), fatigue (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our generation has a strong work ethic.</td>
<td>Strength of character (20), values (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We believe in responsibility and honor.</td>
<td>Strength of character (20), values (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers wanted their kids to have everything.</td>
<td>Giving (11), family dynamics (18), independence (3), shared experiences (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have more freedom as I have gotten older.</td>
<td>Freedom (12), confidence (9), openness (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have the responsibilities I had when I was younger.</td>
<td>Family dynamics (18), freedom (12), adaptability (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The pressure is not there anymore. | *Family dynamics (18), freedom (12),*  
<p>|                                | <em>adaptability (16)</em> |
| I don’t need approval from anyone. | <em>Independence (3), confidence (9), family dynamics (18), freedom (12), adaptability (16)</em> |
| A younger person is always seeking approval from either their boss, in laws spouse…always someone’s approval. | <em>Independence (3), confidence (9), family dynamics (18), freedom (12), adaptability (16)</em> |
| I have anxiety about getting older. | <em>Fear (17), loss of independence (2)</em> |
| I don’t have a spouse or kids so I worry about going into a nursing home because I’ll be alone. | <em>Fear (17), loss of independence (2), family dynamics (18)</em> |
| I don’t want to be a burden to my kids. | <em>Fear (17), loss of independence (2), family dynamics (18)</em> |
| I won’t let anyone do anything for me. | <em>Fear (q), loss of independence (b), family dynamics (r)</em> |
| There is a lack of integrity in advertising today. | <em>Not trusting (7), values (19), perception (1)</em> |
| Baby boomers are not to be disregarded, we are still out there, and still working and consuming. | <em>Perception (1), independence (3), confidence (9), freedom (12)</em> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers will experience less discrimination and pave the way for the next generation.</td>
<td>Perception (1), independence (3), confidence (3), freedom (12), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not old. We are full of zest; we still learn, teach and live.</td>
<td>Perception (1), independence (3), confidence (9), freedom (12), denial (13), this is not me (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is power in numbers and I think we still feel empowered.</td>
<td>Perception (1), independence (3), confidence (9), freedom (12), denial (13), this is not me (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers will change how we age.</td>
<td>Perception (1), independence (3), confidence (9), freedom (12), denial (13), this is not me (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age is always someone who is ten years older than you are.</td>
<td>Appearance (5), perception (1), that is not me (6), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do more with our hair and makeup. Our parents were just old.</td>
<td>Appearance (5), perception (1), that is not me (6), denial (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your mind feels 40, but your body somehow tells you what you can and cannot do.</td>
<td>Perception (1), self-discovery (15), fear (17), fatigue (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Statements and Themes</td>
<td>Natural Meaning Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get tired and it is frustrating.</td>
<td>Perception (1), self-discovery (15), fear (17), fatigue (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age is a state of mind.</td>
<td>Perception (1) self-discovery (15), fear (17), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most employers are smart about age-discrimination now. It is hard to prove.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), invalid (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think you are marginalized a bit at work when you get older.</td>
<td>Perception (1) not trusting (7), invalid (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not going to rock the boat at this age because I am tired.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7), invalid (8), fear (17), fatigue (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age discrimination exists and is exercised today, and is part of the law of averages.</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8), not trusting (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no such thing as loyalty anymore.</td>
<td>Perception (1), not trusting (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The youth want more balance in their life. You used to get a pension, but not anymore.</td>
<td>Adaptability (16), self-discovery (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I just had my 20th anniversary at work and my boss didn’t even say anything to me.</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8), appearance (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I got my job in my 60s, I was afraid to let my boss know how old I was when I was interviewing.</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8), appearance (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your doctor always starts off the conversation by saying, “as you get older…..”</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you get older, your doctor doesn’t listen to you anymore.</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My boss cut my hours from 5 to 3 days a week and hired a guy much younger than me.</td>
<td>Perception (1), invalid (8), loss of independence (2), not trusting (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to stop working until I choose to stop working.</td>
<td>Loss of independence (2), freedom (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My company does seem to respect age but they are hiring people with social technology that we have to work our butt off to learn.</td>
<td>Loss of independence (2), adaptability (16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fake it until you make it.</td>
<td><em>Adaptability (16), perception (1), appearance (4)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you work with your hands or back you get really tired of doing that kind of physical labor.</td>
<td><em>Adaptability (16), fatigue (14), loss of independence (2)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age tables bother me. 73 is the average lifespan for a man and I’m 70.</td>
<td><em>Fear (17), perception (1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is social currency for being attractive, but physical appearance is transitory. You have to make peace with that.</td>
<td><em>Appearance (15), perception (4), self-discovery (1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People tend to ignore you or look right through you I’m noticing.</td>
<td><em>Invalid (8), perception (1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the workforce you feel a little less important.</td>
<td><em>Invalid (8), perception (1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to be discriminated against. The baby boomers are in going through a bit of denial.</td>
<td><em>Perception (1), denial (13)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzed Data – Preliminary Focus Group

In the beginning of this discussion it should be noted that data collected from the 2012 preliminary pilot focus group (see Appendix G) were derived from the interview questions and answers, as these questions were also used in the primary focus group for discussion purposes and for comparison in this chapter. A brief overview of the template questions is presented below:

Question 1

Question 1 asked, “In what ways do you think the views of younger people and older people differ?” Five out of five participants supported the notion that both younger and older people tended to be different both physically and mentally (NMU 10, 12). Overall five out of five participants agreed that they did not need to use technology the way that younger people might use technology (NMU 10, 12). Five out of five participants agreed that mental attitudes and experience contributed towards the differences between the two age groups (NMU 2, 3, 4).

Question 2

Question 2 asked, “In what ways do they differ most?” (NMU 12). Unplanned prompts such as, “When did you have your first ‘aha’ moment that you might be treated differently because of your age?” (NMU 3) and, “Can you give me an example of what age you think old age starts?” (NMU 3, 6, 13) were discussed. These prompts were useful in facilitating communications, and they also helped to determine if the participant’s
meaning and perceptions of old age transformed or evolved over a period of time, or if their perceptions remained unchanged as they experienced the aging process.

**Question 3**

Question 3 asked, “What does the term ‘old age’ mean to you?” Five out of five participants agreed that they did not pay much attention to the aging process (NMU 4, 12, 13). Additionally, five out of five participants agreed that they have always had a positive attitude throughout their life (NMU 4, 6, 11). And, five out of five participants agreed that their attitudes (either positive or negative) did not change over time as they started the aging process (NMU 2, 4). The intention of the additional questions relating to positivism was to let the participants discuss/explore how their outlook on life developed over time, or if it was just an inherent component of their personalities.

**Question 4**

Question 4 asked, “Can you give me some examples of when you believe you were treated more negatively or positively because of your age (NMU 6, 12)?”

The intention of this question was to let the participants think about the various ways an older adult might be treated differently than when they were in their 20s or 30s, or if there were any factors that might contribute towards a change in perception. Additionally, when this researcher asked the participants for examples of when they believed they were treated more negatively or positively because of their age, surprisingly four out of five participants stated they had not experienced being treated negatively because of their age. Only Participant 3 (see Appendix G) spoke about being
treated negatively in the workplace, and had experienced age discrimination from supervisors. Participant 3 also talked about feeling pressure to take an early retirement. Finally, 50% of the participants talked about how they were treated positively because of their age (NMU 6, 7, 9, 10).

**Question 5**

Question 5 asked, “Do you feel any anxiety or depression about getting older?” (NMU 3, 6, 9, 12). This question was an attempt to investigate the participants own fear or apprehensions about the aging process, and to find out what they might be feeling anxiety over. Interestingly, four out of five participants stated that they did not feel fear or anxiety about their future.

**Question 6**

Question 6 asked, “Have any of you been, or knew of someone who was denied housing, medical treatment or employment based on your age?” Only one out of five participants was open about the possibility of being treated differently in the workplace (NMU 6, 7, 9, 10). Additionally, three out of five participants who were widowed confirmed they had talked about getting older and dying with their spouse (NMU 1, 2, 10). All of the participants were in agreement that they liked living communally because they did not get lonely and were able to comfort each other when times got rough. Additionally, five out of five participants spoke about how their grandchildren kept them young (NMU 1, 9, 3).
Question 7

Question 7 asked, “What are the advantages to getting older?” (NMU 1, 9, 3). This question was to help the group think about the change in their lifestyle, and to evaluate whether they enjoyed the aging process. Four out of five of the participants spoke about how they experienced freedom because they “no longer had parental responsibilities.” This lead to a brief discussion surrounding when the participants might have started realizing, or feeling a sense of freedom that they did not experience when they were younger, raising their children and taking care of their families. Five out of five participants agreed that they experienced this new type of freedom at around age 50 (NMU 4, 1, 12).

Analyzed Data – Primary Focus Group

Similar to the preliminary focus group data collected from the 2013 primary focus group were derived from the same interview questions and answers (see Appendix D). For discussion purposes in this chapter, a detailed description of the template questions is presented below:

Question 1

Question 1 asked, “In what ways do you think the views of younger people and older people differ?” Similar to the preliminary pilot focus group responses, seven out of ten participants agreed that they were not as quick learning technological advances (NMU 10, 12). Ten out of 10 participants agreed that people change as they grow older
Additionally, five out of ten participants felt that the youth of today do not have a strong work ethic (NMU 6):

Teenagers’ view of life is so different. They are completely egocentric as we all know. As we get older, at least for me, I think you become a little more aware of your mortality. If you have an illness, you become more aware of it” (Participant 1).

“I have gotten a lot more comfortable in my own skin, and I know who I am as a person” (Participant 4).

We are more productive than younger people, they are lazy butts. They have childcare issues, games after school. I know several young people who come into work at 9:00 and leave at 3:00 to deal with their kids. In their mind, it is a priority. We get more done” (Participant 2).

“As baby boomers, our parents set the example for a strong work ethic” (Participant 7).

“I think we were a very indulgent generation. Many baby boomer parents have spoiled their children, and their expectation is that they don’t have to work for
everything…Mom and Dad will get it for me. But I don’t know where this came from (Participant 3)”

“After the war, every parent wanted their kids to have everything, but that is not preparing people for life, work, and we are seeing that with the boomers because of retirement. They gave everything to their kids” (Participant 5).

“I have an opinion that I think through the 70s we went through a lot of strides for women’s rights. I think my daughter and her friends are so distant from the changes in society we experienced. They have no idea that they are one Supreme Court decision way from losing what women have worked for in the 60s. I have tried to share it but they need to get active and be informed” (Participant 6).

**Question 2**

Question 2 asked, “What does the term ‘old age’ mean to you?” (NMU 12), and “When did you have your first ‘aha’ moment that you might be treated differently because of your age?” (NMU3) or, “Can you give me an example of what age you think ‘old age’ starts?” (NMU 3, 6, 13) were considered. Eight out of 10 participants agreed that their personal views changed over time, particularly as they got closer to age 65.

“In my mind, 65 is old, but not necessarily old age” (Participant 8).
“In my mind, I think the definition of old age is how you individually perceive it to be” (Participant 4).

“All of us say when we look in the mirror we don’t feel or look as old as we actually are” (Participant 10).

“I think of old age the same way I thought of old age when I was nine years old, going past the old age home. I’d just go, oh, I don’t want to go there. I have the exact same fears about being old as I always have, and I think it is horrible that we have to get old. There is nothing good about it” (Participant 1).

“I think once you become incapable of being able to take care of yourself that is when you become old” (Participant 2).

“I’m not dependent on anyone yet, but I watch my children react to me, and I’m pretty capable of taking care of myself, but they struggle with me getting older. They ask me things like, “Mom, are you sure you can do that?” or, “Mom, should you be driving alone at night” (Participant 3)?

“Old age is always someone who is 10 years older than you are” (Participant 5).
“We were 60s children and it was a different time. Our parents were old; even in their 40s they were old to us” (Participant 7).

“We do more with our hair and makeup. Our parents were just old. We try to dress younger and be in the moment” (Participant 6).

**Question 4**

Question 4 asked, “Can you give me some examples of when you believe you were treated more negatively or positively because of your age?” (NMU 6, 12). Similar to the preliminary focus group most participants initially stated that they had not experienced being treated positively because of their age. In fact, only one of the participants spoke to how they were treated positively because of age. Eventually, 5 out of 10 participants spoke about how they had been treated negatively in the workplace, and had experienced age discrimination from their supervisors. Two out of 10 participants also spoke about they felt pressure to just blend in and not cause any waves.

“I have been treated positively. I think I’m a nice person and nobody I work with treats me as an inconsequential person, or treat me like I’m old. They almost look out for me. They are very accepting of this “old dude” working with them” (Participant 8).
“Now I am a lot more outspoken, I demand to be heard. I think I have something important to say and I don’t feel invisible at all. I think people are finally starting to hear my voice” (Participant 10).

“I have seen it in my job. I’m in sales so it is high pressure. I have seen it happen to older women who were not any less successful as younger people, but they were pushed out the door” (Participant 2).

“I am very careful. I don’t want to ruffle any feathers. I try really hard to make myself invisible. That way everything is hunky dory. I have 10 more years, so why I am I going to rock the boat at this age? I don’t want to have to get a new job. I don’t want to travel, it takes too much energy. I have grandchildren, I have flexibility and credibility, and I can go home after work and not have to think about it. I don’t want to go to war anymore, why hit my head against the wall? I’m just tired” (Participant 2).

“I think you have to change your behavior. You don’t call in sick; you are up for the 6:00 a.m. conference call, at the end of the day I make sure that people know I was there for more than nine hours. I’m always willing to go that extra step because I don’t want anybody to say, “hmmmmm, she can’t do this” (Participant 2).
“Yes, I have an issue with it right now the workplace but most employers are subtle about it. It is hard to prove” (Participant 4).

“I think I have experienced it with the young kids who work here in their early 20s, because we live in an age 55 and older community. They think it is assisted living” (Participant 3).

“I have been with the same firm for 24 years and on my 20th anniversary with the firm my boss did not say anything. I guess he paid me for 20 years, but he did not say anything. And now I am down from five days a week to three, and I was replaced by a younger man” (Participant 4).

“This is true. The older you get in your job you tend to leave things along, and at this age this is what I want to do. I will work my tail off, but not say anything” (Participant 8).

“When I got a new job in my 60s I was so worried to let my boss know how old I was” (Participant 5).

**Question 5**

**Question 5 asked, “Do you feel any anxiety or depression about getting older?”** (NMU 3, 6, 9, 12). This question was just an attempt to probe the participants their own
honest fears about the aging process, and to find out what they may be. Seven out of 10 participants agreed that they felt apprehension about growing older.

“Age tables bother me. Seventy-three is the average lifespan for a man. If you make it to 70, there is a good chance you are not going to make it past 73. You have to get past the statistics” (Participant 4).

“My mom is going to be 100 and it bothers me that she doesn’t like to talk about death. I think she is afraid to die. I don’t want her to be afraid to die, and it scares me” (Participant 6).

“I have not had depression or anxiety, but there is an adjustment because there is a certain amount of social currency for being attractive, and physical appearance is transitory, you can’t look that way forever. There is an adjustment that goes with aging and it is a component of how you are valued in society. You have to make peace with that” (Participant 10).

“I do. I am so anxious my doctor is worried” (Participant 2).

“I don’t have children or a spouse, so my fear is going into a nursing home. And my friends are all my age, and they are worried about that too. I want to be safe, where I won’t be thrown away” (Participant 3).
“I want quality of life, not quantity” (Participant 5).

**Question 7**

Question 7 asked, “What are the advantages to getting older?” (NMU 1, 9, 3). This question was to help the group think about the change in their lifestyle, and to evaluate whether they enjoyed the aging process. When this researcher asked what the advantages of getting older were, most participants agreed that they had more freedom as they got older, and all of the men (three out of 10 participants) stated that they did not need to look for acceptance anymore.

“Freedom, I feel very free” (Participant 7).

“Now we have freedoms of choice we never had. We had to work when we were younger, we had kids. Now it is by choice. There are no pressures anymore” (Participant 8).

“I don’t feel free. I don’t have children, siblings or a spouse. I have to work, and when I retire it is all on me. I would love to retire tomorrow but I can’t” (Participant 3).

“I don’t need approval from anyone. I really don’t. I’m not seeking approval from my boss or anyone else, because I don’t care. As a younger person you are always
seeking approval from your boss, in laws, spouse…always somebody’s approval. At some point, you just say I’m okay” (Participant 8).

Ten out of 10 participants spoke to how they believed that the Baby Boomer Generation would redefine aging:

“I think the boomers will experience less discrimination. People don’t expect to be old at 65 or 70” (Participant 5).

“Things are progressing. We are going to be around for a while. Things are being designed for older people because we are such a huge part of the population” (Participant 9).

“We will redefine aging just like we have redefined everything else” (Participant 7).

“We are not old people. We are full of zest, and we want to learn, teach and live” (Participant 6).

**Analysis of Core Themes**

Consistent with the literature reviewed in this study and congruent to Levy’s (2007) Stereotype Embodiment Theory, this data supports this researcher’s hypothesis that prejudice and discrimination against the elderly affects the older adult’s view about
aging and their perceptions surrounding prejudice and discrimination as they move through the aging process. The data also supports the literature reviewed which suggests to accurately identify ageism, the practice of stereotyping must first be recognized by the individuals themselves (Whitbourne & Sneed, 2002).

Overall, many participants in the preliminary pilot focus group expressed that family dynamics (a pattern or process of change, growth, or activity) played an important role in how they related to the aging process. Noted within the literature review, each family has its own patterns of relating to each other, and they are influenced by things like the structure of the family, the personalities of each family member, their cultural background, and shared family experiences (McGowan et al., 2006). Additionally, strength of character was often cited as being needed to “be strong,” or to deal with “situations or events that could be distressing or difficult” throughout one’s aging process, maintaining Logan’s eight positive stereotypes that many people associate with older people as noted in Chapter 2 (Logan, 1992). Adaptability or having the flexibility or ability to change over time was also considered to be a positive attribute, along with having a strong faith in God, or possessing a spiritual belief is some sort of higher power.

Similarly, having strong principles, values, or standards in behavior was held in high regard by many individuals. Respect and independence were emphasized as important characteristics in growing older. Participants also expressed that living independently and being able to feel similar, shared experiences further contributed toward their own self-discovery, and need for personal awareness. This data supports
Bradley’s (2001) theory that healthy elders are likely to draw on their identity not only from past achievements but also from what they would like to accomplish in the future, showing that later in life as a time for revitalization and personal growth. Loss of independence, or having to rely on another person for their care was of great concern to the entire group, as well as experiencing fear about their future. Some denial amongst the participants to refuse or accept experiencing prejudice and discrimination based on their age was observable by this researcher, but not by all of the participants. This data reinforces Sneed and Whitbourne’s (2005) theory discussed earlier in the literature review and could explain why an older adult might end up stereotyping their own peers in an act of avoidance or denying their own aging process.

Comparable to the preliminary pilot focus group, seven out of 10 participants in the primary focus group expressed that family dynamics played an important role in how they related to the aging process, supporting the notion that the experiences and wisdom of elders is respected amongst families (Sweetser, 1984). Additionally, strength of character was also touched on as being needed to deal with “situations or events that could be distressing or difficult” throughout the aging process. Likewise, having strong principles, values, or standards in behavior was held in high regard by almost all of the individuals in both focus groups. Both focus groups also expressed that living independently or experiencing a loss of independence, or having to rely on another person for their care was of great concern, as well as experiencing fear about their future. Interestingly, this researcher identified several additional themes that were not adopted or
regarded as significant by the preliminary pilot focus group, that were important to the members of the primary focus group. One might speculate that the differences in perceptions surrounding the aging experience could be due to age range of this particular group in comparison to the focus group made up of the middle-old (ages 75-84), and the old-old (over age 85) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The primary focus group was comprised of baby boomers, the cohort born between 1946 and 1964 which are just now reaching the average retirement age 65, and fall under the category of the young-old (ages 65-74) (Macunovich, 2000).

In both of the focus groups many of the themes that emerged through the interview process encompassed feelings of confidence, and worth surrounding an individual’s belief in their own abilities combined with self-assurance. Both groups believed that certain freedoms were essential to their lives, such as the right to act, speak and think as they desire. Many themes also surrounded being free from the limitations, boundaries and restrictions that their parent’s and great grandparent’s generations valued in high regard. Discussions focused on the value of appearance, social capital, and the quest to retain their vigor and energy (Bradley, 2001). A majority of the baby boomer parents in the group felt that their generation has given “too much” to their children and agreed that they often found themselves being stuck between their own financial security and that of their children (Macunovich, 2000).

Participants in the primary focus group also discussed hidden or unrevealed feelings of mistrust, and internal misperceptions surrounding prejudice or being
discriminated against based on their age. Almost all of the participants expressed fear of fatigue, or of becoming invalid or incapable of managing their own affairs as they grew older. Interestingly, the refusal amongst some participants to realize that they may have experienced prejudice and discrimination based on their age was noticeable to this researcher, but perhaps not by the participants in the focus group. Supporting the research documented within the literature review, that as people grow older they tend to define old age in terms of greater years than their current age (Logan, 1992). This observation clearly supports the data which implies that a majority of older persons have experienced some ageism to some degree but that it often goes unrecognized or ignored by those who are actually victims of the discrimination (Levy, 2002).

Discussion

This study’s first research question asked, “How do people aged 60 and older perceive prejudice and discrimination?” While analyzing the data, this researcher discovered was that in order to answer the first research question she had to start with looking at how an older adult experiences going through the aging process. Based on the interviews from the preliminary pilot and primary studies, ten out of 15 focus group participants defined or interpreted old age as, “Aging is in the eye of the beholder.” Because aging is an organic and lived experience that spans throughout an older adult’s life, many of the participants observed that their views on their aging experience changed over time, especially as they moved through the aging process. This experience supports the view that as people grow older they might tend to define old age in terms of greater
years than their current age, or regard it as a phase that will never arrive (Logan, 1992). Additionally, most people can perceive the aging experience either positively or negatively, or can experience both positive and negative aspects of the aging process during their lifetime. The human experience of aging is subjective by its very nature, and as Levy’s research has shown an individual’s perceptions on aging can indeed influence one’s awareness of experiencing good health and/or well-being, and overall life satisfaction (Levy, 2009; Levy & Meyers, 2004).

Based on some of comments listed below it is reasonable to presume based on the research that if an older adult is generally in good health, happy, and financially secure then their perceptions about the aging process would tend to be more positive than negative (Levy & Meyers, 2004). It is also reasonable to infer from these data that a positive attitude towards aging, along with health and financial security can also contribute towards the participant’s positive experiences, and self-confident interpretations surrounding their own aging process (Heo et al., 2013).
Table 3

*Perceptions About the Aging Process, 2013 Primary Focus Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>How an older adult perceives going through the aging process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“My thoughts in general about aging have changed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“In my mind 65 is not old.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I think the definition of age is how you perceive aging.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Hold on to youth as long as we can.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“It only registers with people if we act, look or sound old.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I don’t want to go to a nursing home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Old is when you are incapable of taking care of yourself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Old is when someone else takes care of you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“My kids struggle with me taking care of myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I am not old, I still capable of taking care of myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“As you age, people have different views as they go through the aging process.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Your perception about aging changes as you change yourself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“40 years ago you retired and died. We don’t do that anymore.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“Old age is always someone who is ten years older than you are.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>How an older adult perceives going through the aging process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“We do more with our hair and makeup. Our parents were just old.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Your mind feels 40, but your body somehow tells you what you can and cannot do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“I get tired and it is frustrating.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>“Age is a state of mind”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study’s second research question asked “whether or not the characteristics of ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination?” Overall, the findings from this study appear to indicate that even though most of the participants had positive attitudes towards aging 10 out of the 10 participants admitted to experiencing some form of prejudice and discrimination based on their age, or appearance. Additionally, nine out of 10 participants expressed frustration or fear about their future, and openly discussed their own experiences relating to age discrimination particularly by those older adults who were still in the workforce or just recently retired.

This study’s literature review indicated that ageism is a social attitude because it is a way of looking at older adults that discriminates against them. As noted by Palmore (2005), ageism includes prejudice (stereotypes and attitudes), personal discrimination
(behaviors), and institutional discrimination (policies and practices). Based on some of the comments listed below many of the focus group participants expressed honest frustrations about the aging process because as they started growing older they noticed that others started to treat them differently, similar to the subjects in Palmore’s (2001) self-reported ageism survey’s study. Some participants noticed that attitudes towards them started to change, and some participants said they experienced being treated as less valued, less capable, or that they were stereotyped and discriminated against. In fact, after the interviews were completed many participants commented that they were much more aware of the characteristics of age discrimination and also how to recognize when they experience prejudice and discrimination (Palmore, 2001).
Table 4

Perceptions about Prejudice and Discrimination, 2013 Primary Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Do characteristics of ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I feel as an older woman I am becoming invisible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Does youth consider you an equal or are they just polite to you?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“It feels like something is going on at work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“There is an assumption that a younger person might perform better than an older person at work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“A company will put more money in a younger person than someone who is closer to retirement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I stay under the radar at work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I don’t want to make waves at work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Most employers are smart about age-discrimination now. It is hard to prove.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“I think you are marginalized a bit at work when you get older.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“I am not going to rock the boat at this age because I am tired.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Age discrimination exists and is exercised today, and is part of the law of averages.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Do characteristics of ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“The youth want more balance in their life. You used to get a pension, but not anymore.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“I just had my 20th anniversary at work and my boss didn’t even say anything to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“When I got my job in my 60s, I was afraid to let my boss know how old I was when I was interviewing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“As you get older, your doctor doesn’t listen to you anymore.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“My boss cut my hours from 5 to 3 days a week and hired a guy much younger than me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Your doctor always starts off the conversation by saying, “as you get older…..”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, there were several expectations regarding the results of this study. It was expected that a majority of the subjects would have experienced some sort of prejudice and discrimination based on their age. It was also expected that some subjects would express and confirm that both institutional practices and policies perpetuated stereotypes about older people. However, while it was expected that a link between the characteristics of ageism and the characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination
would be demonstrated in the data, it was unexpected that the subjects would confirm to
this researcher that ageism does seem to be pervasive in nature. It was also unexpected
that the prejudice and discrimination sometimes seemed to go unrecognized or ignored by
most of the subjects in the preliminary focus group compared to the primary focus group
even though the literature review demonstrated that there is data to support this theory.

The findings from this study appear to indicate that most of these older adults
have experienced some form of prejudice and discrimination based on their age or
appearance, which was expected. Additionally, none of the participants in either the
preliminary focus group or the primary focus group seemed to be surprised by or
intimidated by experiencing some form of prejudice and discrimination. However, many
participants did express frustration or apprehension over their future, and openly
discussed their experiences and fears about the aging process. Many participants
confirmed that as they started growing older they noticed that others started to treat them
differently as revealed in Palmore’s (2001) self-reported ageism survey that measured the
frequency and types of ageist behaviors in our society. Palmore’s study was important
because it was the first study that showed that older individuals’ perceptions of having
experienced ageism are important to consider. Results from this study confirm Palmore’s
argument that ageist ways of relating to people are in fact, widespread, frequent, and
subtle. This research also confirmed that many of the older adults in this study actually
expected to experience some form of prejudice and discrimination as they aged, and felt
that it was “just a normal part of the aging process.”
Summary

This chapter presented the data and results, which included the participant’s thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about experiencing, or not experiencing prejudice or discrimination as they moved through the aging process. The questions in this chapter were chosen because it was important to obtain information about what kinds of attitudes and behaviors the participants perceived to be prejudicial and discriminatory. Information was gathered using qualitative research methods, and rationale was discussed and appropriateness of the research design was reviewed. The final chapter of the study sets forth conclusions reached in this study. It also offers a discussion on the limitations of the study, coupled with suggestions for future research and recommendations.
Chapter 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify how older adults (60 years and older) perceive prejudice and discrimination, and research whether or not the characteristics of age discrimination have much in common with the characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination. The objective of this study was to understand the participant’s personal experiences and feelings about experiencing (or not experiencing) prejudice and discrimination based on their age or appearance. The methodology used in this study was phenomenology. The findings from this study suggest that most of the older adults that participated in this study have experienced some form of prejudice or discrimination.

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter and presents conclusions that can be drawn from this study based on Levy’s (2001) Stereotype Embodiment Theory, which explains how age stereotypes influence the perceptions of older adults. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the study, coupled with suggestions for future research and recommendations.

This study is significant for two reasons. First, there is a need to address how the characteristics of ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination. Several authors suggest that the majority of older persons report they have experienced ageism in some form, however the review of the literature confirms that many of these studies do not reveal the honest, personal
expressions of prejudice by the aging population (Butler, 2006; Levy, 2001; Palmore, 2005). Second, research was needed to explain how an older adult actually experienced discrimination as they moved through the aging process. As noted in the literature review, this study looked at several factors that contribute towards prejudicial attitudes towards the elderly, such as social practices that inadvertently pass ageist stereotypes, discriminatory practices in the workplace, ageist language, and in the media and advertising.

The first most notable finding/outcome of this study addresses the research question, “How do people aged 60 and older perceive prejudice and discrimination?” The data indicates that most of the participants in the study had experienced some form of prejudice and discrimination based on their age or appearance, which was expected by this researcher. The second most notable finding/outcome addresses the research question asking, “whether or not the characteristics of ageism have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination?” While most of the participants in the study acknowledged that the views of younger and older people do differ, every single participant agreed that the closer they got to old age their views about aging changed over time. As noted by Sneed and Whitbourne (2005) people rarely understand the process of aging until they have reached old age themselves.

It was apparent that all of the participants interviewed had demonstrated and maintained a positive attitude throughout their life, and all of the participants agreed that their attitudes did not change over time. It was clear that positivism was inherent in every
participant’s personality. These data also supports what was discussed by Logan (1992) in the literature review. While noted in this study as being harmful, ageism can also have a positive perspective when the attributes of age are deemed beneficial because having a positive view on aging recognizes an association between aging, greater wisdom, patience, and a heightened appreciation of life’s benefits (Logan, 1992).

The third most notable finding/outcome which was not entirely expected by this researcher was that none of the participants seemed to be surprised or intimidated by experiencing some form of age discrimination. While some authors indicated that older adults typically recognized ageist behaviors, and spoke to the prevalence of ageism in society in general (Dennis, 2007; Palmore, 2003), by contrast the results of this study actually confirmed that some of the focus group participants actually expected to experience some form of prejudice and discrimination. This outcome also supports the Stereotype Embodiment Theory methodology followed in this study which explains how age stereotypes influence the perceptions of older adults (Levy, 2001). By expanding the use of SET in this study to include a wider range of examples of prejudice and discrimination, this study did in fact demonstrate that experiencing ageism could influence an older adult’s implicit beliefs about their own competencies as well as their own self-stereotypes (Levy, 2001).

**Implications of the Study**

This researcher started working on this study in the fall of 2012, with the goal of gaining insight into how older adults’ (aged 60 and older) perceived prejudiced attitudes
and discriminatory behaviors. Three research questions were asked in this study. First, how do people 60 or older define/interpret old age? Second, what kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudicial? Finally, what kinds of behaviors and attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be discriminatory? The research questions were designed and formulated based on this researcher’s data collection instrument with the hope of gaining more information from focus group participants on how they felt about experiencing or not experiencing age discrimination. Based on the results of the study, this researcher will make policy recommendations aimed at addressing how older adults perceive prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors.

Another goal of this research was to fill an important gap in the literature. While most of the literature highlighted in this study suggested that the majority of older persons have experienced ageism to some degree or another, many of the studies did not bring to light older adult’s honest and personal expressions about experiencing age discrimination. The literature available primarily discussed how experiencing prejudice and discrimination could affect older adult’s perceptions about the aging process and how it translated into whether or not they enjoyed good health as a result. In contrast, this study focused on whether or not an older adult recognized if he or she may have experienced prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors, and if those experiences influenced their aging experience.
Another reason for conducting this study was that much of the research reviewed in Chapter 2 did not take into consideration how looking at age discrimination through a phenomenological lens could actually be beneficial towards understanding why discrimination happens in the first place. Finally, a fair amount of research has been directed towards the Baby Boomer Generation but not a great deal of research has documented how older adults’ views might transform over time as they move through the various stages of aging. There is no arguing that the tide is turning, as there are currently 77,000 million aging boomers who are likely to transform the culture and experience of aging much like they have changed other facets of life (AARP, 2002). A responsible and compassionate society must start to be prepared for this paradigm shift. This study aimed at filling some of the gaps in the literature review.

**Limitations**

While this qualitative study was significant for several reasons, it is important to address that there were also a number of limitations inherent in this study. First, upon conclusion of this paper this researcher determined that the study was limited by its relatively small sample size. While qualitative methods serve as a useful tool to convey a participant’s feelings and experiences, it has also been argued that single qualitative methods cannot provide a solid ground for generalizing across cases (Lester, 1999). Although this was a phenomenological study, a larger sample size could have lent itself to greater variance in participant responses as well as participant demographics. Second, while this researcher’s goal was to clearly define how the focus group participants
perceived experiencing age discrimination, given the limited geographic location of the primary focus group, an additional study would need to be repeated in low-income areas to determine similarities and differences of the participants. Repeating this study in additional locations would allow for a greater amount of results from adults aged 60 and older.

Finally, while qualitative research can be effective in paying attention to detail, and useful in discovering similar meanings in a complexity of cases, this type of research method can also be accused of being impressionistic, subjective, and lacking in precision (Lester, 1999). Based on this statement, what was not fully confirmed and considered in this study was the need to identify all of the kinds of attitudes and behaviors that people age sixty and older might perceive to be prejudicial and discriminatory.

**Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how older adults’ (aged 60 and up) perceive prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. It is clear, based on the data collected that views about age discrimination can affect older adults in different ways. While the research did not reflect the need for any significant reforms to current age discrimination practices, the following section includes recommendations for future research, and suggestions for ways to reduce ageism.

There is clearly a need to expand current knowledge regarding prejudicial attitudes towards older adults and discriminating practices against older people. First, the total cost to society of ageism is unknown, and unfortunately very little research has been
conducted in this area. As noted by several authors, given that the older adult population is continuing to increase, many older adults will be left to rely solely on entitlement benefits such as Social Security and Medicare (Benz et al., 2013; Hobbs, 2012; McKinsey, 2008). As the nation’s view of the elderly begins to transform, it will be increasingly important to collect updated research on the costs of age discrimination.

Second, another important area for further research includes an analysis of jobs commonly held by older workers and the extent to which these jobs utilize skills and experience of older workers (Butler, 2006). Policymakers need to study job skills and job opportunities for older workers with the goal of reducing ageism in the workplace (Butler, 2006). Clearly noted in the data presented in this study, the most obvious form of prejudice and discrimination that was observed by the focus group participants was by those still in the workforce or recently retired. This demonstrates that additional phenomenological research needs to be performed on how an older adult may identify age discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, future research into the costs of ageism outside the workplace is also needed.

Third, one suggestion to reduce ageism would be to help to clarify commonly held misperceptions that older people are a burden to society by creating a national campaign that draws attention to negative attitudes, language, and imagery regarding old age, with the aim of increasing awareness of age discrimination in our society (Butler, 2006). Advocates for the elderly could work with the media, foundations, businesses, and
government, with emphasis on developing sensitivity to cultural differences (Butler, 2006).

Finally, it is recommended that an additional focus group be conducted in order to allow for more in-depth exploration of how each factor contributed toward prejudice and discrimination. Due to the time constraints inherent in this study the participant’s responses to the factors that contribute towards experiencing prejudice and discrimination was not completely addressed. Therefore, additional interviews and focus group meetings would be needed to compare how their responses to each factor contributed toward, or did not contribute toward them experiencing ageism and discrimination.

**Conclusion**

The findings from this study sought to expand current knowledge regarding prejudicial attitudes towards older people, discriminating practices against older people, and how these practices and policies can help to perpetuate stereotypes about older people. Information presented in Chapter 1 identified the problem by indicating that older adults may often be targets of prejudice and discrimination, and could face many challenges overcoming the problem given the prevalence of negative stereotypes that are associated with the aging process. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 described an historical overview of data collected on age discrimination and introduced several factors that contributed towards stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age and/or appearance. Chapter 3 described this researcher’s qualitative phenomenological research design and explained the rationale for using this type of
research method. The data described in Chapter 4 attempted to illustrate the results of the study, and discussed the participant’s thoughts, feelings, and/or perceptions, about experiencing, or not experiencing prejudice or discrimination as they moved through the aging process. Chapter 5 provided a summary and discussion of the key findings gathered from the research. There was also a discussion on how the research findings were aligned with the related academic literature reviewed. Limitations of the study were also examined.

It is important to conclude by acknowledging that even though the sample size was relatively small, results from this study may still help to strengthen our current understanding about what kinds of prejudice and discrimination elderly people may face because of their age. It is this researcher’s belief that with an increased knowledge and understanding about older adults and the aging process, prejudicial attitudes towards the elderly could improve, and society could learn that aging stereotypes do in fact have negative impacts on older people. By documenting the extent of prejudice and discrimination toward older persons, this study begins to lay the groundwork for a change in social attitudes and expectations about aging and the elderly.
APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Review Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

(FWA# 00003873)

September 25, 2013

PROTOCOL # 13-14-011

To: Christin Hemann, [redacted]

Cc: Dr. Cheryl Osborne, Gerontology Department

From: Dr. Juliana Raskauskas, Chair

Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects/IRB

RE: How People Aged 60 and Older Perceive Prejudice and Discrimination

The Institutional Review Board approved your application as “Minimal Risk.” This IRB approval is with the understanding that you will promptly inform the Committee if any adverse reaction should occur while conducting your research (see “Unanticipated Risks” in the IRB Policy Manual). Adverse reactions include but are not limited to bodily harm, psychological trauma, and the release of potentially damaging personal information.

The approval applies to the research as described in your application. If you wish to make any changes with regard to participants, materials, or procedures, you will need to request a modification of the protocol. For information about doing this, see “Requests for Modification” in the IRB Policy Manual.

Your approval expires on September 24, 2014. If you wish to collect additional data after that time, you will need to request an extension for the research. For additional information, see “Continuing Review” in the IRB Policy Manual.

Should you need further information about the protection of human subjects, please consult our website at http://www.csus.edu/research/humansubjects/ or contact the IRB Office at 916-278-7565.
APPENDIX B

Overview of the Preliminary and Primary Focus Group Studies

AGENDA

1:00 – Welcome and Introductions
   Hemann/Residents

1:15 – Overview of Class Project and Instructions for Focus Group
   Hemann

1:30 – Overview of Research Questions for Discussion
   Hemann

Elderly people are often targets of prejudice. They are victims of discrimination in hiring and/or forced retirement, they are negatively portrayed in the media, and often targets of stereotypes about their competence and mental acuity.

“Ageism” can be defined as stereotyping and discriminating against individuals or groups because of their age. While both the young and old can experience being stereotyped and discriminated against, there is little evidence that the young experience discrimination to the extent that older persons do. Therefore, perhaps “old-ageism” is a more precise term to use when referring to stereotypes about differential behavior towards older persons.

It is reasonable, based on my statements above, that the characteristics of old-ageism can have much in common with those characteristics surrounding prejudice and discrimination.

I believe prejudice against the elderly exists for three reasons listed below:
• Prejudicial attitudes towards older people, old age and the aging process.
• Discriminating practices against older people.
• Institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about older people.

Therefore, my research questions are as follows:

1. How do people define/interpret “old age”?
2. What is the meaning of “old age” to people age 60 and older?
3. What kinds of attitudes do people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudicial?

1:35 – Discussion/Focus Group Questions

• In what ways do you think the views of younger and older people differ?
• In what ways do they differ most?
• What does the term “old age” mean to you?
• Can you give me some examples when you believe you were treated more negatively or positively because of your age?
  How did you feel about that?
• Have you or someone you know been denied housing, medical treatment or employment because of your age?
  If so, what did you do about it?
• In what ways have you been treated differently with respect to health care because of your age?
  What did you do in response to being treated differently?
• In what ways have you had to change your type of employment because of your age?
  Why did you have to do this?
• In what ways have you had to change your expectations in salary?
  Why did you have to do this?
• Have you had to change employment because of your age?
  Why did you have to do this?
• Have you ever tried to conceal your age?
  Why did you have to do this?
• Do you feel any anxiety or depression about getting older?
  If so, how are you prepared to deal with it?
• Based on our conversation today, can you tell me if your thoughts about experiencing prejudice as you grow older? How will your experiences change?
• What are the advantages to getting older?

3:00 – Thank you for Participating!!! Adjournment

Hemann/Residents
APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by Christin Hemann, a Special Masters graduate student at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS). The area of study for the student is in Aging and Social Services. This is a study to help assist the researcher in refining her research questions in preparation for writing her thesis during the fall semester of 2013. The study will investigate how people define and/or interpret “old age.” The study will also explore what kinds of attitudes people age 60 and older perceive to be prejudicial and discriminatory.

You will be participating in a focus group and asked a series of questions relating to the views of younger and older people about the aging process, if you have experiences being treated differently because of your age, if you have been denied housing, medical treatment or employment because of your age, how you feel about experiencing prejudice, and the advantages to getting older. The focus group should take about two hours.

The questions I am going to ask you are personal and may make you feel uncomfortable. If at any time you do not want to answer a question, please notify the researcher and we will move on to another person in the group. If at any time you wish to discontinue participating in the panel please notify the researcher and the interviewer will dismiss you from the group, no questions asked.

During the panel you will be given the opportunity to discuss your views on age discrimination, and gain insight into your thoughts about experiencing prejudice or discrimination as you experience the aging process. It is hoped that the results of the study will provide the researcher insight into how people age 60 and older might perceive to be prejudicial and discriminatory behavior.

Identifying information in the study will be confidential. Your name will not be used in the study results. Only the content of the focus groups will be used in the study results. Your consent form will be kept separate from the interview information. The researcher is a mandated reporter, therefore, if you report any information indicating you
are a danger to yourself or someone else this information must be reported to local authorities.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this research. If during the course of your participation you require a referral to any local social service agencies as a result of your participation in the study, information will be provided to you. Or, you may call 2-1-1 Sacramento for free, confidential information and referral service that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you have any questions about this preliminary research, you may contact [REDACTED] or Doctor Cheryl Osborne, Director of the CSUS Gerontology Department at 916-278-7163.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in this study. At any time during your participation in the panel if you choose not to participate, no information obtained from your interview will be used. By signing below, you are saying that you understand the risks involved in this research and agree to participate in it.

By signing this form you are stating that you understand the research interview will be recorded on audiotape. The audiotape will identify you, the subject by first name and subject number only to ensure confidentiality. The audiotape will be destroyed by December 31, 2014. You have the right to review the tape at any time prior to the destruction date.

_________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant                        Date

_________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Researcher                        Date
APPENDIX D

Preliminary and Primary Focus Group Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you think the views of younger and older people differ?
2. In what ways do they differ most?
3. What does the term “old age” mean to you?
4. Can you give me some examples when you believe you were treated more negatively or positively because of your age?
   i. How did you feel about that?
5. Have you or someone you know been denied housing, medical treatment or employment because of your age?
   i. If so, what did you do about it?
6. In what ways have you been treated differently with respect to health care because of your age?
   i. What did you do in response to being treated differently?
7. In what ways have you had to change your type of employment because of your age?
   i. Why did you have to do this?
8. In what ways have you had to change your expectations in salary?
   i. Why did you have to do this?
9. Have you had to change employment because of your age?
   i. Why did you have to do this?
10. Have you ever tried to conceal your age?
   i. Why did you have to do this?

11. Do you feel any anxiety or depression about getting older?
   i. If so, how are you prepared to deal with it?

12. Based on our conversation today, can you tell me if your thoughts about experiencing prejudice as you grow older? How will your experiences change?

13. What are the advantages to getting older?

14. There are examples of positive discrimination, which exists in the form of favoritism or preferential treatment. What are your thoughts about positive discrimination?
## APPENDIX E

Demographic Information about the Subjects in Preliminary Pilot Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Income Source</th>
<th>Medical Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Social Security and 401K</td>
<td>Medicare and Secure Horizon (Supplemental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Social Security and Income from Rentals</td>
<td>Medicare and State Farm (Supplemental)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Italian American/Caucasian</td>
<td>Social Security AARP (Supplemental)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Native American/Caucasian</td>
<td>Still Employed</td>
<td>Blue Shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>Medicare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX F

**Phenomenological Analysis, Preliminary Pilot Focus Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific Statements and Themes</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger and older people are different both physically and mentally.</td>
<td>Adaptability (10), shared experiences (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t use technology the way younger people do.</td>
<td>Adaptability (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each generation has their “must haves”.</td>
<td>Shared experiences (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t pay any attention to being old.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting older does not bother me.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A positive attitude gets you through life.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My attitude has not changed over time as I started the aging process.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), adaptability (10), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have always had a good attitude.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger people now are so worried all the time, filled with anxiety and stress, but they cannot handle the stress.</td>
<td>Strength of character (2), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age to me is respect.</td>
<td>Respect (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to age with grace, even when my body is deteriorating, I want to respect my body.</td>
<td>Respect (7), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to reach old age you have to be happy and young at heart.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), adaptability (10), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You need to find a solution to your problems,</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), adaptability (10), self-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Challenges/Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>face them, and just do what you need to do.</td>
<td>discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If things get to me, I don’t complain. If I have problems nobody knows</td>
<td>Strength of character (2), independence (5), adaptability (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t dwell on my problems, I accept what life is and try and make it</td>
<td>Strength of character (2), independence (5), adaptability (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your environment contributes to a positive attitude.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), shared experiences (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good family relations play a role in your environment.</td>
<td>Family dynamics (1), positive attitude (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A beautiful attitude will go a long way towards making you healthy.</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not been treated negatively because of my age.</td>
<td>Independence (5), respect (7), denial (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the pressure to take an early retirement.</td>
<td>Fear (9), loss of independence (6), values (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We view people at fifty as elderly, and we discriminate against them.</td>
<td>Fear (9), shared experiences (12), lack of independence (6), values (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging becomes a bit more frightening when you hit about sixty or sixty-five.</td>
<td>Fear (9), shared experiences (12), lack of independence (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fear my independence being taken away from me.</td>
<td>Loss of independence (6), fear (9), values (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You either get tough or die, because depression will set in and then you</td>
<td>Positive attitude (4), fear (9) denial (13), adaptability (10), shared experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have to deal with that issue.</td>
<td>(12), strength of character (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith gets me through tough days, also walking and stimulating my mind.</td>
<td>Faith (11), positive attitude (4), self-discovery (3), values (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like living here because I do not get lonely, and we are able to comfort each other when times get rough.</td>
<td>Shared experiences (12), adaptability (10), family dynamics (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My grandchildren keep me young.</td>
<td>Family dynamics (1), independence (5), self-discovery (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you get older you can just be yourself, you don’t need to impress anyone.</td>
<td>Independence (5), values (8), strength of character (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have freedom because I no longer have parental responsibilities weighing me down.</td>
<td>Independence (5), family dynamics (1), values (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This researcher started the interview with a fairly specific opening question – “In what ways do you think the views of younger and older people differ (NMU 10, NMU 12)?” and, “In what ways do they differ most (NMU 10, NMU 12)?” – to non-leading and open-ended questions such as, “Can you say more about that?” and, “Can you please give me examples of what you are speaking to?” The goal of this strategy was to let the participants tell their stories, so that this researcher could grasp more fully the participant’s experiences and thought processes.

When this researcher asked the participants in what ways did they think the views of younger people and older people differ most of the answers leaned towards how both younger and older people tended to be different both physically and mentally (NMU 10, NMU 12). Over all, the group agreed that they did not need to use technology the way that younger people do (NMU 10, NMU 12). And all participants agreed that mental attitudes and experience contributed towards the differences as well (NMU 2, NMU 3, NMU 4).

“Each generation has their must haves” (Participant 1).

This researcher’s second direct question led from, “What does the term ‘old age’ mean to you?” (NMU 12) to unplanned prompts such as “When did you have your first ‘aha’ moment that you might be treated differently because of your age?” (NMU 3c) or
“Can you give me an example of what age you think ‘old age’ starts?” (NMU 3, NMU 6, NMU 13). These prompts were useful in facilitating communications, and also to determine if the participant’s meaning and perceptions of old age transformed or evolved over a period of time, or if their perceptions remained unchanged as they experienced the aging process. When this researcher asked participants what did the term old age mean to them all five participants agreed that they did not pay much attention to the aging process (NMU 4, NMU 12, NMU 13).

“Don’t pay any attention to being old” (Participant 2).

“Aging does not matter to me” (Participant 3).

Additionally, all five participants agreed that they have always had a positive attitude throughout their life (NMU 4, NMU 6, NMU 11). And, all of the participants agreed that their attitudes (either positive or negative) did not change over time as they started the aging process (NMU 2, NMU 4). The intention of the probing questions relating to positivism was to let the participants think about if their outlook on life developed over time, or if it was just an inherent component of their personalities.

“Younger people now are so worried all the time, filled with anxiety and stress, but they cannot handle the stress” (Participant 4).

“Old age to me is respect. I want to age with grace, even when my body is deteriorating, I want to respect my body” (Participant 5).

All participants agreed that in order to reach old age you have to (NMU 3, NMU 7):
“Be happy and young at heart” (Participant 1).

“You need to find a solution to your problems, face them, and just do what you need to do” (Participant 3).

“If things get to me, I don’t complain. I have problems but nobody knows about them. I don’t dwell on my problems, I accept that ‘life is’ and I try and make it better” (Participant 2).

Additionally, all participants agreed that their environment contributed towards a positive attitude, and that their family relations played a role in their environment (NMU 1, NMU 12).

“A beautiful attitude will go a long way towards making you healthy” (Participant 2).

The next question was “Can you give me some examples of when you believe you were treated more negatively or positively because of your age?” (NMU 6, NMU 12). The intention was to let the group think about the various ways an elderly person might be treated differently than when they were in their 20s or 30s, or if there were any factors that might contribute towards a change in perception. When this researcher asked the participants for examples of when they believed they were treated more negatively or positively because of their age, surprisingly all but one participant stated they had not experienced being treated negatively because of their age. Only one participant spoke about how she was treated negatively in the workplace, and had experienced age discrimination from her supervisors. She also talked about how she felt pressure to take
an early retirement. This researcher speculated it was because she was the only participant still in the workforce. Many of the participants talked about how they were treated positively because of their age (NMU 6, NMU 7, NMU 9, NMU 10):

“I was given free things or discounts because of my age” (Participant 5).

When this researcher asked the participants if any of them had been, or knew of someone who was denied housing, medical treatment or employment based on their age only one participant was open about the possibility of being treated differently in the workplace because of her age (NMU 6, NMU 7, NMU 9, NMU 10):

Yes, it is true. I’ve seen it myself and have been a victim of it and I think it is our society as a whole. We view people at 50 as elderly, and we discriminate against them. It has happened to me. I applied to [blank] college for the writing center position. It is something I’m good at. And, it would have benefited me financially because I would have been classified as full-time and I could have kept teaching my three classes. I applied for the job as the head of the writing center. You did need to know all the APA and MLA, which I know…and I was passed over for a young man! I happen to know this young man and his philosophy about teaching and so last semester I sent my students down there to have him help them. In the meantime I received a letter from the center stating that I was not qualified, which was a slap in the face and an insult! (Participant 1)

All of the participants agreed that aging becomes more frightening when you “hit about 60 or 65” because they universally fear their independence being taken away.
Independence seemed to be a reoccurring theme throughout the discussion. Another participant talked about his perception about being discriminated against in the medical field, “up until about ten years ago, Medicare supplemental insurance was not available to older adults in Nevada County but it was available to beneficiaries in Placer and Sacramento counties” (Participant 4).

The next question asked “If they felt any anxiety or depression about getting older” (NMU 3, NMU 6, NMU 9, NMU 12). This question was just an attempt to probe the participants their own honest fears about the aging process, and to find out what they may be. Interestingly, four out of the five participants stated that they did not feel fear or anxiety about their future:

“You either get tough or die, because depression will set in and then you have to deal with that issue” (Participant 3).

“Faith gets me through tough days, and also walking and stimulating my mind” (Participant 2).

Additionally, many of the participants who were widowed confirmed they had talked about getting older and dying with their spouse (NMU 1, NMU 2, NMU 10). All of the participants were in agreement that they liked living communally because they did not get lonely and were able to comfort each other when times got rough. Additionally, all of the participants spoke about how their grandchildren kept them young (NMU 1, NMU 9, NMU 3).
The last question was, “What are the advantages to getting older?” (NMU c, NMU j, NMU l). This question was to help the group think about the change in their lifestyle, and to evaluate whether they enjoyed the aging process. When this researcher asked the participants about the advantages to getting older, one participant answered:

“You can just be yourself, and you don’t need to impress anyone” (Participant 4).

Other participants spoke about how they experienced freedom because they “no longer had parental responsibilities.” This lead to a brief discussion surrounding when the participants might have started realizing, or feeling a sense of freedom, that they did not experience when they were younger, raising their children and taking care of their families. And, all of the participants agreed that they underwent this new type of freedom at around age 50 (NMU 4, NMU 1, NMU 12).
REFERENCES


